

## SLEEP AWARENESS MONTH

SLEEP DISORDERS AFFECT APPROXIMATELY 40 MILLION IN THE UNITED STATES

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### Causes of Disrupted Sleep

Disrupted sleep is a general term that refers to any condition in which sleep doesn't follow its normal cycle and/or a particular cycle doesn't last as long as it should. Because of the general nature of the term "disrupted sleep," the causes of disorders that fall into this category are varied. Some of the common risk factors associated with disrupted sleep include:

- diet
- drug and alcohol use
- exercise patterns
- mood disorders, such as depression
- sleep environment
- snoring
- use of prescription medication

As a result, identifying the underlying cause of disrupted sleep is the key to finding the proper treatment and getting sleep patterns back on track. Without treatment, disrupted sleep can cause people to suffer from:

- blurry vision
- exhaustion
- irritability
- mood swings
- poor memory
- trouble learning

Over time, if disrupted sleep persists, patients can develop more serious conditions that include hypertension and heart disease.

### Types of Disrupted Sleep

#### Sleep Apnea

Sleep apnea is a type of sleep disorder in which a person periodically stops breathing (skipping at least one breath or more) while they sleep. Apnea, a term that literally translates to "without breath," is medically defined as a period of at least 10 seconds without breathing that is accompanied by a specific EEG (a test of electric brain activity) reading and/or de-saturation of oxygen in the blood.

Each case of sleep apnea is categorized as either central or obstructive. While central sleep apnea is characterized by patients who stop breathing because they aren't making an effort to breathe, obstructive sleep apnea refers to cases in which patients are making an effort to breathe, but breathing is disrupted due to some physical blockage of airflow.

Daytime drowsiness and fatigue are the most common symptoms of sleep apnea. Because these symptoms are so general, cases of sleep apnea are frequently undiagnosed or misdiagnosed.

#### Restless Leg Syndrome & Periodic Limb Movement Disorder

Restless leg syndrome (RLS) and periodic limb movement disorder (PLMD) are two conditions that cause disrupted sleep. While RLS causes discomfort throughout the legs that prevents a person from falling asleep, PLMD is characterized by involuntary movements during sleep that affect the sleep cycle.

## Delayed Sleep Phase Syndrome

Delayed sleep phase syndrome (DSPS) refers to sleep disorders that revolve around the timing of sleep. DSPS patients tend to go to sleep extremely late and then experience difficulty waking up. Although those with DSPS tend to fall asleep in the wee hours of the morning, no matter when they lie down, they consistently fall asleep at the same time.

DSPS tends to start in adolescence and may correct itself as a person reaches adulthood. Treatment options for DSPS that tend to involve changing the sleep environment, altering diet and exercise habits and examining and adjusting other aspects of one's lifestyle, such as a medication regimen and caffeine intake. While these treatments can help DSPS, the condition itself is not curable.

## Parasomnias?

A parasomnia is a partial arousal, meaning that the person exhibits symptoms of being both asleep and awake at the same time. Most parasomnias include physical or verbal behaviors that are considered undesirable and sometimes even dangerous.

Parasomnias can be caused by any number of factors. Biological factors, stress and depression are some of the most common factors that can cause parasomnias. Though they tend to be a little more common in children, adults account for 44% of these disorders.

- **Confusional Arousals:** This happens when a person is awakened from a period of deep sleep during the early part of the night and is left confused with short-term memory issues.
- **Nightmares:** These vivid events happen when a person is awakened suddenly from REM sleep by a dream that is causing fear or anxiety.
- **Nocturnal Leg Cramps:** This involves sudden, painful cramping of one or both calf muscles during sleep.
- **REM Sleep Behavior Disorder (RBD):** The person is in REM sleep and acts out violent dreams through body movements and sounds – more common in older men.
- **Sleep Bruxism:** AKA teeth grinding during sleep. When a person grinds or clenches their teeth during sleep. The method for treating this is usually a mouth guard that is worn during sleep.
- **Sleep Enuresis:** AKA bedwetting, this occurs when a person is unable to control their urinary functions while they are asleep.
- **Sleep Paralysis:** A person with this parasomnia experiences paralysis when going to sleep or waking up. They cannot move any part of their body. Episodes of this usually last a very short time, and are often ended by a sound or the touch of someone else.

- **Sleep Talking:** This usually occurs during a sleep-wake transition of the sleep cycle. The person can utter sounds or even entire sentences – but has no memory of doing this in the morning.
- **Sleep Terrors:** Also known as night terrors, this occurs when a person is suddenly awakened and feels terrified. A sleep terror usually only lasts about 15 minutes. Sleep terrors are most common in children.
- **Sleepwalking:** Also known as somnambulism, sleepwalking occurs when a person moves around while they are sleeping. This tends to run in families, and it can be dangerous because a sleepwalker is unaware of their actual surroundings.

Some disrupted sleep issues resolve themselves on their own after a period of time. However, if symptoms persist, or seems to interfere with getting enough sleep to perform normal daily activities, then a trip to the doctor is advised.

A number of treatments are available to treat disrupted sleep. These include behavior modifications, lifestyle changes, exercise and medications. A doctor can diagnose and treat the condition appropriately.

## Want to Learn More?

Please search the websites below for more information on sleep disorders and their affects on your daily life.

### Neurology Channel

[www.neurologychannel.com/sleepdisorders](http://www.neurologychannel.com/sleepdisorders)

### Center for Disease Control

[www.cdc.gov/nasd](http://www.cdc.gov/nasd)

### WEB MD

[webmd.com](http://webmd.com)

Source: Sleep Deprivation.com; Center for Disease Control;