


Restless Legs Syndrome

What is it? Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS) is a neurological disorder that causes an irresistible urge to move the legs. RLS can cause difficulty in falling or staying asleep, which can be one of the chief complaints of the syndrome. Many people who have RLS also have periodic limb movements of sleep (PLMS). These are jerks or twitches that occur every 20 to 30 seconds on and off throughout the night. This can cause partial awakenings that disrupt sleep.

How is it diagnosed? There is no test for RLS, but PLMS can be diagnosed on a sleep study. RLS symptoms are unpleasant sensations in the calves, thighs, feet or arms. The sensations are often described as deep-seated, creeping, crawling, jittery, tingling, burning, or aching. Sometimes the sensations are difficult to describe. The symptoms are not usually described as a muscle cramp or numbness. RLS symptoms occur primarily at night, and are usually less noticeable during the day. The sensation typically begins while lying down or sitting for an extended period of time, such as in a car, airplane, or movie theater. The sensation of RLS lessens with movement such as stretching, shaking, or walking.

Who gets the disorder? RLS affects up to 10 percent of the population and occurs in both males and females. Even though RLS may begin at any age, most patients who are severely affected are middle-aged or older. In addition, the severity of the disorder appears to increase with age. Older patients experience symptoms more frequently and for longer periods of time.

What causes RLS? The exact cause is not known, and it can run in families. RLS can be associated with other conditions such as pregnancy, low iron levels, kidney disease, peripheral neuropathy, and other sleep disorders. RLS can be worsened by certain prescription and over-the-counter medications. Using alcohol or caffeine can increase RLS symptoms. Getting too little sleep can also make RLS symptoms more severe.

How is RLS treated? RLS is a lifelong condition, and no cure is available. Although RLS does not lead to other serious conditions, symptoms can range from bothersome to disabling. The symptoms may come and go for weeks or months on their own. Some of the ways that RLS symptoms can be managed are described below:

- Eliminate alcohol and caffeine from your diet.
- Do not suppress the urge to move. Get out of bed and find an activity to get your mind off your RLS.

- Elevate your desktop or bookstand to a height that will allow you to stand as you work or read.
- Begin and end each day with stretching or gentle massage.
- Make sure you are getting enough sleep at night.
- Regular moderate exercise can help you sleep better. However, excessive exercise has been reported by some patients to aggravate RLS symptoms.
- Taking a hot bath, massaging the legs, or using a heating pad or ice pack can help relieve symptoms in some patients.
- Try relaxation techniques, such as meditation or yoga. Stress can worsen RLS.
- For very mild symptoms, try taking an over-the-counter pain reliever such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, others) when symptoms begin.
- Some patients with RLS require prescription medications such as Requip or Mirapex.

Where can I get more information about RLS? Contact the Sleep Medicine Center of Kansas or the Restless Legs Syndrome Foundation

Restless Legs Syndrome Foundation
1610 14th St NW Suite 300
Rochester, MN 55901
Phone: 507-287-6465
Fax: 507-287-6312
Email: rlsfoundation@rls.org
Web: www.rls.org

Sleep Medicine Center of Kansas is an American Academy of Sleep Medicine Accredited Sleep Center

www.sleepmedicinecenterofkansas.com

PHONE | 316-651-2250 **TOLL-FREE** | 800-876-5111

EAST WICHITA | 818 N Carriage Parkway | Wichita, KS 67208

NORTHEAST WICHITA | Kansas Heart Office Plaza | 9350 E 35th St N, Suite 102 | Wichita, KS 67226

WEST WICHITA | 750 N Socora, Suite 100 | Wichita, KS 67212

NEWTON | 720 Medical Center Dr | Newton, KS 67114

PRATT | 124 Commodore, Suite B | Pratt, KS 67124