

RESTLESS LEGS SYNDROME

SLEEP STATISTICS

Restless legs syndrome affects as many as **10 percent** of Americans **

Though restless legs syndrome can begin at an early age, it worsens with age

Pregnancy or hormonal changes can temporarily worsen restless legs syndrome

More than **70 million** Americans suffer from disorders of sleep and wakefulness**

Of the 70 million, nearly **60 percent** have a chronic disorder**

Research suggests that adults require an average of **8 to 8.5 hours** of sleep each night**

Each year, sleep disorders, sleep deprivation and sleepiness add an estimated **\$15.9 billion** to the national health care bill**

The International Classification of Sleep Disorders lists **84 sleep disorders** of sleep and wakefulness that serve as a guide for diagnosis

For a complete list of AASM-accredited sleep centers, visit www.aasmnet.org or call (888) 41-AWAKE

**Statistic from the National Institutes of Health National Center for Sleep Disorder Research

Restless legs syndrome is characterized by leg sensations that usually occur before sleep onset and causes an almost irresistible urge to move legs. These sensations—usually described as creeping, crawling, tingling or aching—may affect any part of the leg and one or both legs. Partial or complete relief of the sensations occurs with leg motion, and the symptoms, which follow a set daily cycle, can return upon cessation of these movements.

The cause of restless legs syndrome is unknown in most cases, though factors, including family history, pregnancy, chronic diseases, high caffeine ingestion and anemia, may be associated with the syndrome.

Though it may be difficult to diagnose because there is no laboratory test to detect the syndrome, a physician can help determine if an individual is suffering from restless legs syndrome and may refer the patient to a sleep center for further evaluation. There, a sleep practitioner will offer a diagnosis and tailor a treatment plan.

For individuals suffering from a mild form of restless legs syndrome, a health care provider may suggest lifestyle changes and activities like a hot bath, leg massages, heating pads, exercise, and the elimination of caffeine to reduce symptoms. For more severe cases of restless legs syndrome, medication is the most effective treatment option. Medication options fall into the three categories:

- **Benzodiazepines**
These are depressants that allow patients to sleep better though they may not suppress sensations of restless legs syndrome.
- **Dopaminergic agents**
Used to treat Parkinson's disease, these drugs reduce motion by affecting the level of dopamine, a chemical messenger, in the brain. These drugs include pramipexole (Mirapex), pergolide (Permax), ropinirole (Requip), and a combination of carbidopa and levodopa (Sinemet).
- **Opioids**
These narcotic drugs that act as pain killers to reduce severe symptoms. Examples of these drugs include the combination of oxycodone and acetaminophen (Percocet, Roxicet), and the combination medicine hydrocodone and acetaminophen (Vicodin, Duocet).

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine is a professional organization dedicated to advancing sleep health care by setting clinical standards for the field; advocating for recognition, diagnosis and treatment of sleep disorders; educating professionals dedicated to providing optimal sleep health care; and fostering the development and application of scientific knowledge.

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