

Restless Leg Syndrome

“My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken”. Psalm 62:1,2

Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS) is described by those who suffer from it as an irresistible urge to move their legs when resting. Individuals experience sensations in their legs that **compel** them to move, and the movement relieves the feeling for a little while. RLS is not a serious disorder in itself, but it can be very uncomfortable and interferes with a good nights sleep. People with RLS may have trouble falling and staying asleep. Frequent jerking movement of the legs not only keeps the person with RLS from sleeping well, but may also keep their sleeping partner awake.

The actual sensations are often hard to describe. Some common words used to describe them are creeping, tingling, and prickling. Usually they are felt right after going to bed, but can happen during the day, also. These same sensations are sometimes felt in the arms or feet. Stress seems to increase the symptoms.

This condition can spill over into every aspect of a person’s life. The lack of quality sleep can cause depression, poor memory, and daytime exhaustion. Sufferers may be unable to sit through a movie or ride on an airplane.

It is estimated that between 3-15% of all people in the United States have RLS. Twice as many women as men have it, and it usually occurs in adults who are middle aged and older.

Usually there is no actual cause of Restless Leg Syndrome. However, in a small number of cases it is caused by another medical condition. The following are possible medical causes and their treatments:

1. Low iron in blood (anemia)--Iron supplements
2. End stage kidney disease-----Kidney transplant
3. Pregnancy-----Delivery

A diagnosis is made when all four of the symptoms described below are present:

1. a strong urge to move the legs that **cannot** be resisted
2. symptoms that begin or worsen when the legs are at rest
3. an easing or relief of symptoms with movement
4. symptoms that are worse at night, especially when lying down

While there is no cure for this condition (unless a medical cause has been identified), treatment consists of lifestyle changes. The following are recommended to bring relief:

- warm or cool packs
- warm baths
- massage therapy
- moderate exercise—gentle stretching

- well-balanced diet
- no caffeine, tobacco, or alcohol
- relaxation techniques, yoga, or meditation

There are new medications on the market, and they seem to be very effective. While lifestyle changes are the preferable way to ease symptoms of RLS, it is good to know there are medications available for those who need them.

The Restless Leg Syndrome Foundation was formed in 1989 by eight people who shared common symptoms for a condition there was no name for! Since then, they have promoted awareness, treatments, and research. If you have these symptoms and cannot get a good nights sleep, see your physician. Help is available.

For further information:

www.rls.org

www.ninds.nih.gov (search restless leg syndrome)