
Understanding Restless Legs Syndrome

Are you ever annoyed by a creeping or itching feeling in your legs? Do you often feel an urge to move your legs while sitting or lying in bed? This can keep you from falling asleep at night. Or wake you up and prevent you from sleeping. You may then feel tired during the day. If you have these problems, talk to your healthcare provider. They can suggest a treatment plan and help you find ways to sleep better. Other conditions are similar to restless legs syndrome. These include peripheral neuropathy, venous stasis, and drug-induced akathisia. Pregnancy can be linked to a temporary form of restless legs syndrome. It most often happens during the third trimester. The symptoms usually go away one month after delivery. People on dialysis because of kidney failure also can have restless legs syndrome.

Restless legs syndrome (RLS)

RLS is a creeping, crawly, or jumpy feeling in the legs. It makes you want to move them. Symptoms of RLS often occur when you are sitting or sleeping. This discomfort can keep you from falling asleep. RLS is more common in older people. It also tends to run in families. Drinking too much caffeine or alcohol may make symptoms worse. Iron deficiency, diabetes, or kidney problems can contribute to RLS. You may also have symptoms in your arms in more severe cases.



Periodic limb movement of sleep (PLMS)

PLMS is sudden, repetitive leg jerking during sleep. The person you sleep with is often the one who notices it. Your legs may jerk many times during the night. You and your partner may both have trouble sleeping and feel tired in the morning. PLMS shouldn't be confused with the normal leg or body twitching many people have when first falling asleep. Many people with RLS also have PLMS.

Treating these problems

If RLS causes poor sleep and daytime symptoms, you may need help. Choices include:

- Using prescribed medicines for RLS
- Making lifestyle changes such as exercise. Limit caffeine and alcohol. And don't smoke.
- Taking iron pills. These may help if you can tolerate the side effects.

Also, talk with your healthcare provider about the medicines you take that may contribute to your RLS, such as some medicines for depression or nausea.

- Not using medicines for depression and nausea

Healthy lifestyle tips

Try these healthy lifestyle tips to help you better manage RLS:

- Manage stress and learn ways to relax. Deep breathing techniques and visualization can help to relax your muscles and calm your mind. Try relaxing with yoga or meditation
- Exercise regularly. It can help reduce stress. You will also have more energy during the day and be more tired at bedtime. Afternoon exercise is best. Nighttime exercise may affect how well you sleep.
- Keep a regular sleep schedule. Go to bed and get up at the same time each day.
 - Don't take naps or limit napping.
 - Make sure the bedroom is quiet, dark, and not too hot or too cold.
 - Use your bed only for sleep and sex.
- For short-term relief of RLS symptoms, try:
 - Rubbing your legs
 - Having a massage
 - Taking a hot or cold bath
 - Doing activities that make muscles in your hands or legs work