

What treatments are available for Restless Leg Syndrome ?

The first step in treating RLS is to see if you have any conditions that are related to the problem. The main conditions that might be related to RLS are listed above as possible causes of RLS.

Detecting and treating related conditions may sometimes relieve the symptoms of RLS. Home remedies are enough to help some people with mild or occasional RLS. These include: hot baths, leg massage, ice packs, applied heat, aspirin or other pain relievers, regular exercise and the elimination of caffeine.

When symptoms are severe or home remedies are ineffective, you may need prescription medications to treat RLS.

Drugs used to treat Restless Leg Syndrome

Ropinirole (dopamine agonist)

Sinemet (dopamine precursor)

Clonazepam (benzodiazepines)

Gabapentin (anticonvulsants)

Codeine (opioids)

Some drugs that may worsen Restless Leg Syndrome

- Antidepressants
- Antihistamines
- Antiemetics (anti sickness)
- Lithium
- Major tranquilizers

Useful contacts

www.rls.org

www.sleep-apnoea-trust.org

Sleep Apnoea Trust

0845 6060685

Further assistance

Sleep nurse Helpline:

01438 284898

Sleep diagnostic clinic:

01438 285027

www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk

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Restless Legs Syndrome And Periodic Limb Movements

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For further information

Sleep Dept Helpline 01438 284898

What is Restless Leg Syndrome ?

It is a movement disorder. It involves an intense urge to move your legs at bedtime. RLS symptoms can vary from person to person. These symptoms can be hard to describe. Many people say their legs feel `creepy` or `crawly`. This is quite different from the pain of muscle cramp. The uncomfortable sensations of RLS appear most often in the calves of the legs. They are usually worse when sitting or lying still. You can find temporary relief by stretching or moving the legs. Some people also have symptoms in the arms and other parts of the body.

What causes Restless Leg Syndrome?

Researchers are unsure of its exact cause. Some medical conditions increase the chance of developing RLS, such as

- Low blood iron levels (anaemia)
- Poor circulation in the legs
- Nerve problems in the spine or legs
- Muscle disorders
- Kidney disorders
- Alcoholism
- Certain mineral or vitamin deficiencies
- Diabetes
- Arthritis

RLS is often hereditary. About 50% of people with RLS who don't have one of the medical conditions listed have a family member with similar symptoms. This strongly suggests a hereditary cause for the disorder in some people. For unknown reasons, hereditary cases of RLS tend to be more severe and harder to treat.

Some medications may trigger RLS. These include over the counter allergy and cold medications. Caffeine, alcohol and tobacco use may make the condition worse.

What symptoms might you get

Some people with RLS have symptoms only at certain times, others on a regular basis. Nightly symptoms can create a constant need to stretch or move the legs. This may prevent you from falling or staying asleep. As a result you may be tired during the day and be unable to perform well at work or take part in social activities.

Other symptoms caused by RLS are:

- Sleep loss or poor quality sleep
- Anxiety and depression
- Difficulty travelling by car or plane when sitting for long periods

Some people with RLS also have Periodic

Limb movements (PLMs)

What is Periodic Limb Movements ?

PLMs often start at the big toe with an upward bending of the ankle knee or hip. The movements are sometimes described as jerks or kicks. PLMs occur at regular intervals. They usually happen every 20-40 seconds. They also occur in clusters in the first half of the night. PLMs usually occurs in the legs but may also affect the arms.

Like RLS, PLMs may contribute to poor sleep quality. These leg movements often cause you to briefly wake up from your sleep. These brief awakenings are called "micro arousals". They can cause you to feel sluggish and tired the next morning. PLMs may also disturb the sleep of your bed partner, as he or she may complain of being kicked or bumped during the night.

How is Restless Leg Syndrome diagnosed ?

You may need to see a sleep specialist who has expertise in RLS. The specialist will base their diagnosis on your medical history, physical exam and questionnaire score. Additional tests such as blood tests or overnight sleep study can investigate whether your complaints are related to another medical condition.