



GWINNETT SLEEP

SLEEP DISORDERS CENTER OF GWINNETT PULMONARY GROUP

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RESTLESS LEG SYNDROME/PERIODIC LIMB MOVEMENT DISORDER

What is restless legs syndrome (RLS)?

Restless legs syndrome (RLS) is a cause of insomnia (trouble sleeping) for many people. RLS sufferers experience aching, twitching, tingling, burning, or prickling sensations in the lower leg muscles when they lie in bed or sometimes when they are sitting down. The discomfort is relieved only by getting up and standing or walking.

How does it occur?

The exact cause of RLS is not known. It tends to run in families. It is more common after middle age and occurs more frequently in women than in men. Many people with RLS can recall "growing pains" in their legs during childhood. It may be that a nerve malfunction is involved. RLS has also been linked with alcohol dependence, smoking, too much caffeine (usually from drinking coffee), rheumatoid arthritis, anemia, and diabetes. Use of some medicines may make symptoms worse.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

aching, twitching, tingling, burning, prickling in the lower leg when you are lying down or sitting
relief from the symptoms when you stand up or walk around.

How is it diagnosed?

The diagnosis of RLS is based on your medical history. Your health care provider will examine you and may order blood tests or other tests to check for an underlying medical problem, such as anemia, rheumatoid arthritis, or diabetes.

How is it treated?

Your health care provider can prescribe medicine to relieve the symptoms and allow you to sleep. Levodopa (Sinemet), a drug usually used for Parkinson's disease, is often prescribed.

For many people who have RLS, it is a great relief just to learn that there are other RLS sufferers like themselves and that they are not alone.