



COULD YOU HAVE RESTLESS LEGS SYNDROME?

Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS) is a neurological disorder characterised by an irresistible urge to move to stop uncomfortable or odd sensations, most often in the legs. RLS can lead to sleepless nights and can significantly impact on a person's quality of life.

You may have RLS if you can answer 'Yes' to all of the following:

1. You have an urge to move your legs, usually accompanied by uncomfortable, unpleasant sensations.
2. The need to move and unpleasant sensations are only present or worsen during periods of rest or inactivity such as lying down or sitting.
3. The need to move and unpleasant sensations are partially or totally relieved by movement, for example walking or stretching.
4. The need to move and unpleasant sensations are worse or only occur in the evening or night.
5. Symptoms are not solely accounted for by another condition such as leg cramps, positional discomfort, leg swelling or arthritis.

LEARN MORE ABOUT RLS:

www.rls-uk.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/rlsuk

Forum: www.healthunlocked.com/rlsuk

We are RLS-UK, a small charity operated by a team of volunteers who are dedicated to helping people living with Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS), a neurological disorder which is thought to affect up to 10% of the UK population.

RLS is a "spectrum" disease and can affect people of all ages. Some experience mild symptoms but it can be intolerable for others, causing major disruption to sleep and significantly impacting on quality of life.

RLS can cause considerable discomfort during waking hours, particularly when the sufferer is in a relaxed state. However it is usually most acutely experienced in the evening or at night.

The sensations associated with RLS are most often compared to an itching or tickling in the muscles, like "an itch you can't scratch" or an unpleasant "tickle that won't stop." The sensations typically begin or intensify when a person is in a relaxed state.

There are two recognised forms of RLS:

- Primary or idiopathic RLS has no known cause and usually begins slowly before approximately 40-45 years of age and is often genetically linked.
- Secondary RLS often has a sudden onset and is usually associated with another medical condition e.g. iron deficiency anaemia or the use of certain drugs.

About one in five pregnant women also develop the condition, usually in the third trimester and often continue to experience symptoms after childbirth. In children, RLS is often wrongly identified as 'growing pains' or ADHD.

ABOUT RLS

Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS), also known as Willis-Ekbom disease, is a neurological disorder characterised by an irresistible urge to move to stop uncomfortable or odd sensations.

Although its name indicates that it affects the legs, RLS can affect the arms, torso, head, and other parts of the body. Moving the affected body part can temporarily suspend the sensations associated with RLS, thereby providing temporary relief.

While RLS is thought to affect up to 10% of people in the UK, it is a much misunderstood and often ridiculed condition. It is a "spectrum" disease with some people experiencing only mild symptoms or minor annoyance while for others it can be intolerable, causing major disruption to sleep and significant impairments in their quality of life.

Many of those living with RLS also experience varying degrees of pain. The condition can cause considerable discomfort during waking hours, particularly when the sufferer is in a relaxed state. However RLS is usually most acutely experienced in the evening or at night when people are trying to sleep.

In many cases RLS symptoms begin when a person goes to bed. Just as they are beginning to relax the symptoms appear and the person has no choice but to get out of bed to stretch - this can happen many times in one night. RLS can lead to long sleepless nights and daytime fatigue and invariably impacts on the quality of life of the sufferer, including their employment, and those close to them.



SYMPTOMS OF RLS

The sensations associated with RLS are most often compared to an itching or tickling in the muscles, like "an itch you can't scratch" or an unpleasant "tickle that won't stop." It has also been described as a 'creepy-crawly' feeling or like there's fizzy water inside the legs. The sensations typically begin or intensify when a person is in a relaxed state:

- Symptoms tend to be worse if a person is in a confined space such as in a cinema seat, a car or on an airplane, or when a person is relaxing, sitting down or in bed.
- Symptoms are usually worse in the evening. In many cases symptoms only occur in the evening, especially when the person is trying to get to sleep. The symptoms can make it difficult to relax and sleep, leading to tiredness the next day.
- Symptoms are usually eased briefly by moving, walking, massaging or stretching the legs or affected area. However, the symptoms tend to return again.
- Symptoms usually affect both legs but can affect other body parts too.

In addition, most individuals with RLS have limb jerking during sleep, referred to as Periodic Limb Movements (PLM). You can learn more about PLM on our website.

RLS FACTS

There is currently no known cure for RLS but lifestyle changes and medications can make it easier to manage.

It is estimated that 80% of people with RLS also have Periodic Limb Movement Disorder (PLMD).

Up to 25% of pregnant women experience RLS. For many, it will remain after the birth of their child.

Although considered a disease affecting older people, almost 3/4 of those interviewed by RLS-UK said their symptoms had manifested before they had reached the age of 40.

While the specific cause of RLS is still largely unknown, we do know that genes play an important role in many instances.

Research by sleep specialists indicates that at least 25% of the children who have a diagnosis of ADHD may truly have Restless Legs Syndrome or Periodic Limb Movements or a combination of the two.

There is currently no known cure for RLS but there are lifestyle changes and medications that can make RLS easier to manage. Visit our website (www.rls-uk.org) for more details.

GET IN TOUCH



EMAIL US
help@rls-uk.org



JOIN THE RLS FORUM ON OUR WEBSITE
www.rls-uk.org

THERE ARE TWO RECOGNISED FORMS OF RLS:

Primary or idiopathic RLS has no known cause and usually begins slowly, before approximately 40–45 years of age. It is often genetically linked and it is likely that another family member may also share the condition. Primary RLS can come and go, sometimes for months on end, and is often progressive, meaning it gets worse with age.

Secondary RLS often has a sudden onset and is usually associated with another medical condition (e.g. iron deficiency anaemia) or the use of certain drugs. Some medications, such as the antihistamines in cold and allergy remedies, make the symptoms worse for some people (so while Benadryl tends to make most people sleepy, for example, it may actually intensify the symptoms in a person with RLS, making it harder for them to sleep.)

RLS may start at any age, including childhood, and is a progressive disease for some, while the symptoms may remit in others. It affects men and women, young and old, although it is most commonly seen in women over the age of 40. Symptoms will gradually worsen over time in about two thirds of people with the condition and may be severe enough to be disabling.

About one in five pregnant women also develop the condition, usually in the third trimester and often continue to experience symptoms after childbirth. In children, RLS is often wrongly identified as 'growing pains'.

RLS is often unrecognised or misdiagnosed but there is a growing awareness of the condition amongst medical practitioners. In many people, the condition is not diagnosed until 10-20 years after symptoms begin. However, once correctly diagnosed, RLS can often be treated successfully.

DIAGNOSIS

The International Restless Legs Syndrome Study Group (IRLSSG) has proposed a set of RLS diagnostic criteria - the fifth of these criteria was recently added. Diagnosis of Restless Legs Syndrome can be made if all of the five criteria are met:

- 1 A need to move the legs, accompanied or caused by uncomfortable, unpleasant sensations in the legs.
- 2 Any kind of sensation may be a manifestation of RLS and a wide variety of descriptions have been used ranging from "painful" to "burning" - some people say it feels like they have insects inside their legs or arms. Sometimes the need to move is present without the uncomfortable sensations and sometimes the arms or other body parts are involved in addition to the legs.
- 3 The need to move and unpleasant sensations are exclusively present or worsen during periods of rest or inactivity such as lying or sitting.
- 4 The need to move and unpleasant sensations are partially or totally relieved by movement such as walking or stretching at least as long as the activity continues.
- 5 The need to move and unpleasant sensations are worse or exclusively occur in the evening or night.
- 6 Symptoms are not solely accounted for by another condition such as leg cramps, positional discomfort, leg swelling or arthritis.

A SINGLE QUESTION FOR RAPID SCREENING

The European journal of neurology reported a new single question for the rapid screening of RLS in the neurological clinical practice - "When you try to relax in the evening or sleep at night, do you ever have unpleasant, restless feelings in your legs that can be relieved by walking or movement?". This question has 100% sensitivity and 96.8% specificity for the diagnosis of RLS.



SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH RESTLESS LEGS SYNDROME



What is RLS?