

NARCOLEPSY QUICK FACTS

Narcolepsy is a chronic neurological condition that impairs the brain's ability to regulate the sleep-wake cycle. It affects about 1 in 2,000 people— 3 million people worldwide.



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NARCOLEPSY SYMPTOMS

Symptoms vary by person but may include:

- Excessive daytime sleepiness: Periods of extreme sleepiness during the day that feel comparable to how someone without narcolepsy would feel after staying awake for 48-72 hours. Often resulting in difficulty concentrating and staying alert.
- Cataplexy: Striking, sudden episodes of muscle weakness usually triggered by emotions such as laughter, exhilaration, surprise, or anger. The severity may vary from a slackening of the jaw or buckling of the knees to falling down. The duration may be for a few seconds to several minutes and the person remains fully conscious (even if unable to speak) during the episode.
- Hypnagogic and hypnopompic hallucinations: Visual, auditory, or tactile hallucinations upon falling asleep or waking up.
- Sleep paralysis: The inability to move for a few seconds or minutes upon falling asleep or waking up. It is often accompanied by hypnagogic or hypnopompic hallucinations.
- Disrupted nighttime sleep: Unlike public perceptions, people with narcolepsy do not sleep all the time. Timing of sleepiness is “off” with narcolepsy so one may fight sleepiness during the day but struggle to sleep at night.

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SCIENCE OF NARCOLEPSY

There are two types of narcolepsy: narcolepsy with cataplexy and narcolepsy without cataplexy. Recent research suggests that narcolepsy with cataplexy is caused by a lack of hypocretin, a key neurotransmitter that helps sustain alertness and regulate the sleep-wake cycle. Less is known about narcolepsy without cataplexy.

DIAGNOSIS

If you suspect that you or a loved one may be experiencing symptoms of narcolepsy, it's important to consult with a board-certified sleep specialist.

NARCOLEPSY TREATMENTS

Treatments are available today and can improve symptoms of narcolepsy. Symptom management varies widely by person and it often takes a long time to find an optimal combination of treatments.

RAISING AWARENESS



Because of low awareness and misperceptions, there is an average of 8 to 15 years between narcolepsy symptom onset and diagnosis. It's estimated that the majority of people with narcolepsy are currently undiagnosed or misdiagnosed (common misdiagnoses include epilepsy, depression and schizophrenia).



Project Sleep is a 501(c)(3) non-profit raising awareness of sleep health and sleep disorders. In 2019, we proudly partnered with other patient organizations around the world to establish the first World Narcolepsy Day!



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On Sept. 22nd each year, World Narcolepsy Day raises critical awareness for narcolepsy on a global scale. Get involved via our website and raise your voice online using #WorldNarcolepsyDay.