

## Frequently Asked Questions About Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS)

*If you're experiencing leg pain, a constant urge to move, and/or difficulty sleeping, it can affect your daily life. It's important to determine whether your symptoms are related to a health problem like RLS. Below, we've put together a list of commonly asked questions to help you access the information you need.*

### What is RLS?

Restless Legs Syndrome, sometimes also called Willis-Ekbom disease, refers to a nervous system disorder that results in an overwhelming urge to move your legs. RLS is also recognized as a sleep disorder because it is known to disrupt a person while sleeping or resting.<sup>1,2</sup>

### Who gets RLS?

It's estimated that between 7% and 10% of people living in the United States are affected by RLS. The exact reason a person develops RLS is not currently known. However, studies show that there may be a link between RLS and a disruption in dopamine pathways. Dopamine is a chemical found in the brain that helps you control your movements. Genetics may also play a role in the development of primary RLS. This is because the condition commonly runs in families.<sup>1,2</sup>

### Who treats RLS?

While there is currently no known cure for RLS, you have several options when it comes to managing your symptoms. Talk to your doctor if your RLS symptoms are interfering with your everyday life. Your doctor can help you determine the best course of action for you.<sup>1</sup>

### What does RLS feel like?

RLS often causes the following sensations and sleep-related symptoms<sup>2,3</sup>:

- An urge to move
- Discomfort in the legs

Patients who suffer from RLS often describe their pain as itching, gnawing, creepy-crawling, or pulling. In many cases, these symptoms worsen during sleep or make it difficult to fall asleep.

The nighttime disruptions can have an impact on your overall sleep health and quality of life.<sup>1</sup>

### Are there different types of RLS?

There are 2 types of RLS known as primary RLS and secondary RLS.<sup>1</sup>

- **Primary RLS** is the more common type. There is no known cause, but it seems to run in families. This type of RLS is also known as familial or hereditary RLS. Symptoms of primary RLS often occur before age 40<sup>1,2</sup>
- **Secondary RLS** is the less common type of RLS. It develops in response to another health condition such as renal failure or iron deficiency. Medications may also contribute to secondary RLS<sup>1,2</sup>

### How will I know if I have RLS and not another sleep disorder?

Like many sleep disorders, RLS can be bothersome while you're at rest or asleep. The only way to know for sure if you have RLS is to talk with your doctor. Your doctor may look for some of the following signs to help diagnose RLS<sup>1,3</sup>:

- A strong urge to move your legs or other limbs
- Symptoms that worsen while you're sleeping or resting
- Symptoms that are temporarily relieved by movement

### What can I do to manage my RLS symptoms?

There are several steps you can take to manage the symptoms of RLS, including the following<sup>1</sup>:

- Keep a symptom diary to track when your symptoms occur
- Partner with your doctor to learn about your treatment options
- Make lifestyle changes under the supervision of your doctor

# Frequently Asked Questions About Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS)

## What if my RLS medication isn't working?

There are several prescription medications that are used for RLS symptom relief. Your doctor can help you determine which medication and dosage is right for you. If a certain medication is not working for you, your doctor may need to adjust your treatment.<sup>1</sup>

## Are there any lifestyle or self care changes I can make?

In addition, your doctor may recommend nonpharmacologic approaches, including the following lifestyle changes and self-care strategies<sup>1</sup>:

- Identifying habits that worsen your symptoms
- Discovering behaviors that help you cope with RLS, like walking or stretching
- Eating a healthy, balanced diet
- Practicing good sleep habits, such as going to bed at the same time each night

Talk to your doctor to learn more about managing your RLS symptoms.

## What is RLS augmentation?

After taking some RLS medications, some patients' symptoms get worse because of a condition called augmentation. If you suffer from augmentation, you may initially feel relief from RLS symptoms, but over time, the medicine no longer works the

same way and your symptoms return. You might notice your symptoms developing earlier in the evening and spreading to your arms and trunk. If augmentation occurs, your doctor may need to adjust your treatment plan to help you feel relief again.<sup>1</sup>

## What should I do if my RLS symptoms get worse?

Talk to your doctor if you notice your symptoms worsening over time. Worsening symptoms can be caused by many different factors. Together, you and your doctor can determine the next steps to take in your treatment. Do not make changes to your treatment strategy without speaking with your doctor first.<sup>1</sup>

## Where can I turn for RLS support?

Below is a list of helpful resources that can give you more information about the symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment of RLS.

- [RestlessLegs.com](http://RestlessLegs.com)
- [RLS.org](http://RLS.org)
- [SleepFoundation.org](http://SleepFoundation.org)
- [National Institutes of Health RLS Information](http://NationalInstitutesofHealthRLSInformation)
- [RLS Online Discussion Group](http://RLSOnlineDiscussionGroup)

## References

1. Restless legs syndrome: causes, diagnosis and treatment for the patient living with restless legs syndrome (RLS). Restless Legs Syndrome Foundation. [www.rls.org/file/causes-092015.pdf](http://www.rls.org/file/causes-092015.pdf). Accessed April 18, 2018.
2. Restless legs syndrome fact sheet. National Institutes of Health. [www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/Patient-Caregiver-Education/Fact-Sheets/Restless-Legs-Syndrome-Fact-Sheet](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/Patient-Caregiver-Education/Fact-Sheets/Restless-Legs-Syndrome-Fact-Sheet). Accessed April 18, 2018.
3. Allen RP, Walters AS, Montplaisir J, et al. Restless legs syndrome prevalence and impact: REST general population study. *Arch Intern Med*. 2005;165(11):1286-1292.



© 2018 Arbor Pharmaceuticals, LLC.

All rights reserved.

August 2018. PP-NP-US-0436