

Orthopaedic Connection

Restless Legs Syndrome

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

For some unknown reason, typically later in the evening, a peculiar "nervous" feeling comes over your legs accompanied by an extreme urge to move them. Walking around for a time helps ease the situation, but it can still be hard to get to sleep.

Say howdy to RLS as doctors call it for short.

People who study it say 10% of the population experiences it at times. It definitely occurs more in older persons.

Symptoms In Legs

- Deep seated crawling feeling
- Tingling, burning, aching in the calves
- Can occur in thighs, calves and/or feet
- Symptoms range from mildly bothersome to incapacitating
- Evening time
- Great urge to move legs
- Comes on while sitting or lying down

Diagnosis

RLS is usually diagnosed by history, that is the patient's description of their symptoms. Of course a thorough physical exam should always be done. Lab studies are done, but typically not too helpful.

Iron deficiency however may worsen RLS. Unfortunately, an underlying condition that may cause RLS is rarely found.

If You Have RLS Avoid -

- Antihistamines
- Anti-nausea medication
- Alcohol, Tobacco, Caffeine

Treatment

- Massage legs, stretch
- Walk, ride exercise bike

- Drugs

There are several that are used, but it gets beyond the scope of our discussion to name them. They are all prescription drugs so you would need to get it by prescription from your doctor. The drugs occur in four groups:

- Drugs affecting dopamine in the brain
- Anti-seizure drugs
- Sleep medication
- Opioid pain medication

RLS is not something I am actively treating as an Orthopaedic Surgeon. I do however see many patients who say they have it and are under treatment by their own doctor.

I wanted you to have somewhat more familiarity with the problem. Hopefully I did that. See you next week.

Gratiot County Herald Archive and Office Website

You reach the Archive through the new, improved website www.orthopodsurgeon.com. It exists for you! A great collection of information at the click of a mouse.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush