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## The Cause And Symptoms Of Narcolepsy

By Heather Colman

The main characteristic of Narcolepsy is overwhelming excessive daytime sleepiness (EDS), even

after adequate nighttime sleep. A person with Narcolepsy is likely to become drowsy or to fall asleep, often at inappropriate times and places. Daytime naps may occur with or without warning and may be irresistible. These naps can occur several times a day. They are typically refreshing, but only for up to a couple hours. Drowsiness may persist for prolonged periods of time. In addition, night-time sleep may be fragmented with frequent awakenings.

Daytime sleepiness, sleep paralysis, and hypnagogic hallucinations also occur in people who do not have Narcolepsy, more frequently in people who are suffering from extreme lack of sleep. Cataplexy is generally considered to be unique to Narcolepsy.

In most cases, the first symptom of Narcolepsy to appear is excessive and overwhelming daytime sleepiness. The other symptoms may begin alone or in combination months or years after the onset of the daytime naps. There are wide variations in the development, severity, and order of appearance of cataplexy, sleep paralysis, and hypnagogic hallucinations in individuals. Only about 20 to 25 percent of people with Narcolepsy experience all four symptoms. The excessive daytime sleepiness generally persists throughout life, but sleep paralysis and hypnagogic hallucinations may not.

The symptoms of Narcolepsy, especially the excessive daytime sleepiness and cataplexy, often become severe enough to cause serious problems in a person's social, personal, and professional lives and severely limit activities.

While the cause of Narcolepsy has not yet been determined, scientists have discovered conditions that may increase an individual's risk of having the disorder. Specifically, there appears to be a strong link between narcoleptic individuals and certain genetic conditions. One factor that may predispose an individual to Narcolepsy involves an area of Chromosome 6 known as the HLA complex. There appears to be a correlation between narcoleptic individuals and certain variations in HLA genes, although it is not required for the condition to occur.

## The Cause And Symptoms Of Narcolepsy

Learning as much about Narcolepsy as possible and finding a support system can help patients and families deal with the practical and emotional effects of the disease, possible occupational limitations, and situations that might cause injury. A variety of educational and other materials are available from sleep medicine or Narcolepsy organizations. Support groups exist to help persons with Narcolepsy and their families.

Disclaimer – The information presented here should not be interpreted as medical advice. Please talk to your doctor for more information about Narcolepsy.

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<http://www.Narcolepsy-journal.info>

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### **Learn how to cope with Narcolepsy without seeing doctors!**

**By Ebe Heng**

### **Learn how to cope with Narcolepsy without seeing doctors! by Ebe Heng**

Narcolepsy is a malfunction of the sleep/wake regulating system in the brain which until recently was of unknown origin. Its most common manifestation is Excessive Daytime Sleepiness and sleep attacks.

Symptoms of Narcolepsy includes:

- a. Temporary paralysis on falling asleep or awakening (sleep paralysis).
- b. Hallucinations – vivid images or sounds – on falling asleep or awakening (Hypnagogic and hypnopompic hallucinations respectively).
- c. Moments (but sometimes extended periods) of trance-like behaviour in which routine activities are continued on "auto-pilot" (Automatic behaviour).
- d. Interruption of night-time sleep by frequent waking periods, marked by quickening of the heart rate, over-alertness, hot flushes, agitation, and an intense craving for sweets.

Is there any treatment?

There is no cure for narcolepsy, but the symptoms can be controlled with behavioral and medical therapy. The excessive daytime sleepiness may be treated with stimulant drugs or with the drug modafinil. Cataplexy and other REM-sleep symptoms may be treated with antidepressant medications.

Medications will only reduce the symptoms, but will not alleviate them entirely. Also, many currently available medications have side effects. Basic lifestyle adjustments such as regulating sleep schedules, scheduled daytime naps and avoiding "over-stimulating" situations may also help to reduce the intrusion of symptoms into daytime activities.

### Drug Therapy

Stimulants are the mainstay of drug therapy for excessive daytime sleepiness and sleep attacks in narcolepsy patients. These include methylphenidate (Ritalin®), modafinil, dextroamphetamine, and pemoline. Dosages of these medications are determined on a case-by-case basis, and they are generally taken in the morning and at noon. Other drugs, such as certain antidepressants and drugs that are still being tested in the United States, are also used to treat the predominant symptoms of narcolepsy.

The major side effects of these stimulants are irritability, anxiety, quickened heart rate, hypertension, substance abuse, and disturbances of nocturnal sleep. Methylphenidate and dextroamphetamine are known to cause hypertension. A common side effect of modafinil is headache, usually related to dose size, which occurs in up to 5 percent of patients. Pemoline poses a very low but noticeable risk for liver complication. None of these stimulants influence the occurrence of narcolepsy's auxiliary symptoms and usually are not used to treat them.

Modafinil does not carry the addiction potential that methylphenidate and dextroamphetamine do. In fact, the latest development in treatment is a new modafinil drug called Provigil®, which does not act as a stimulant and so does not produce side effects like anxiety and irritability.

## The Cause And Symptoms Of Narcolepsy

Provigil's therapeutic effects have been observed in maintenance of wakefulness test research, where patients have tripled their wakefulness.

Although there is no cure for narcolepsy, excessive daytime sleepiness, sudden sleep onset, and cataplexy. Proper sleep hygiene, which includes a consistent sleep schedule and the avoidance of shift work and alcohol, can drastically reduce the ill impact of narcolepsy.

And often, patients with narcolepsy feel refreshed after a short nap; therefore, taking short scheduled naps may greatly benefit patients combatting excessive daytime sleepiness.

How important is a good night sleep worth to you? Ebe Henghas co-created the ultimate, informative and useful sleep directories for anyone with any sleep related problems. Rid that insomnia bug and get the sleep that you deserved! Check out => <http://www.1-2-sleep.com>



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