RESTLESS LEGS SYNDROME

Presented by: Brost Chiropractic & Wellness Centre

The cause for Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS) has been a mystery for some time but newer research shows it is a neurological disorder related to the peripheral nervous system, including the nerves running from the lower back into the legs. Over 12 million people in North America are affected with RLS.

Studies have noted that RLS can affect both men and women, though more women are affected than men. It can happen to people of any age with the majority being middle-aged or older and the severity of the condition often increases with age.

Signs and Symptoms:

Symptoms of RLS are many and can develop as sensations of numbness, burning, stinging, itching or tightness. Other people may feel pain, cramps or muscle spasms. Many people seem to have the sensations happen during the night and while moving the legs seems to help control the irresistible and involuntary urge to move the limbs, relief is usually temporary. Some find getting out of bed and walking helps to control the symptoms, however sleep is constantly being disturbed adding to the problem.

Night time is not the only time RLS attacks can occur. Symptoms may be noticeable during the day and sometimes only during certain activities. Others may experience symptoms only while sitting or standing or during a certain time of day. Symptoms can also become more intense and more frequent, occurring for longer periods of time as the condition progresses.

For many other people, the uncontrolled movements may increase toward the evening while they are sitting or resting. It was once thought to be only a disorder that occurs and disrupts sleep. However, clinically more people are describing the condition as a problem that occurs in the evening before bedtime.
Typically, the knee, ankle and big toe joints all bend as part of the movement and often in unison. The movements vary from slight or strenuous, to wild kicking and thrashing. The movements usually last a few seconds and then relax, and can be repetitive. During the day or evening, they disrupt activity and thought, while at night it disrupts sleep affecting a person’s health due to lack of deep and restful sleep.

What causes RLS?

Some of the causes are attributed to those people who have other health problems, such as diabetes, those who have been on chemotherapy or other prescription drug toxins. Studies show it can affect people who have poor general health, those who are anemic or are withdrawing from sedative medications. RLS is even more common in individuals with iron deficiency, pregnancy, kidney disease and those who undergo dialysis.¹

Other associated conditions include varicose veins, fibromyalgia, sleep apnea, uremia, thyroid disease, Parkinson’s disease, celiac disease, rheumatoid arthritis and certain autoimmune diseases. In a 2007 study, RLS was detected in 36% of people attending a vein disease clinic compared to 18% in a control group.²

Treatment?

While expensive diagnostic tests have failed to come up with an answer, most people are at a loss to find help and usually end up taking some form of medication. These somewhat control the symptoms, at least for a while – until they don’t. Often the effects of the medications have consequences worse than the disease or condition itself – and the individual is still left with the original problem, as well.

According to some research, one cause may be a low level of iron in the body and suggest a serum ferritin level test is done. For some people increasing ferritin will eliminate or reduce RLS symptoms. However, it is NOT advised to take oral iron supplements without first having ferritin levels tested, as many people with RLS do NOT have a low iron level and must avoid an iron overload.³

For disturbed sleep and a short-term release of discomfort you can try walking, ice packs, heating pad, leg massage or a hot bath. A vibratory counter-stimulation pad on the legs at night has been found to help some people.⁴

RLS and Chiropractic Care:

As RLS is classified as a neurological disorder the answer may be found in an examination of your spine and nervous system. AND this is where chiropractic care comes in — the experts in the spine and its connecting nervous system.

In order for a limb to move, twitch or jerk — it must receive a signal from your nervous system. If the nerve is compressed or irritated in the spine due to a subluxation it can cause many different symptoms, including pain, numbness, itching or a burning sensation as the nerves are the electrical system of our bodies.

Whether your symptoms are mild or severe, happen frequently or periodically you cannot go wrong with having your body’s “electrical system” checked out by a chiropractor, if you have never been to one before. Make an appointment today!!

References and Sources:


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