

Narcolepsy



Overview

This is a disorder of your brain and nervous system. Your brain has trouble managing sleep/wake cycles. You sleep poorly, and you feel very drowsy during the day. You may fall asleep without warning at inappropriate and dangerous times. This can disrupt your life.

Causes

We don't fully understand the cause of narcolepsy. Several factors may play a role. It may be linked to low levels of a chemical that helps your brain regulate sleep. It may be linked to a brain injury, or to a problem with your immune system. And, your genes may play a role.

Symptoms

Narcolepsy causes you to feel very sleepy during the day. You may frequently fall asleep for brief periods. You may fall asleep while you are in the middle of a conversation, or while you are working. You may also have a wide range of problems when you sleep at night. You may act out your dreams. Your breathing may stop and start. You may have hallucinations and a feeling of being unable to move or speak as you fall asleep or wake up. Some people who have narcolepsy occasionally experience brief episodes of muscle weakness when they are awake. These can be triggered by intense emotion. When it happens, you suddenly lose control of your muscles. You may lose control of part or all of your body. You may collapse and be unable to move. This can last for a few seconds or a few minutes.

Treatment

Treatment options include medications and lifestyle changes to improve sleep. Proper care is important to make sure you don't fall asleep at a dangerous time, harming yourself or others. Your healthcare provider can create a plan that's right for you.