

Sleep Centre

Parasomnias

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

You have been given this leaflet because you have been diagnosed with, or are suspected of having, a parasomnia. A parasomnia is an experience or behaviour that occurs when you are asleep. This leaflet provides information about parasomnias, and how you can reduce your risk of them occurring. It is not meant to replace the discussion between you and your care team.

What are the symptoms of a parasomnia?

A parasomnia is an activity, behaviour or emotion that occurs during sleep or on waking up. This can include sleepwalking, sleep talking, crying, initiating sexual activity, waking up confused or eating while asleep. You may or may not remember your parasomnia.

Why do parasomnias occur?

Parasomnias may occur due to a blurring of the sleep-wake cycle. In some people they occur because their brain does not prevent them from acting out their dreams.

Are parasomnias linked to any other medical conditions?

In some cases, a parasomnia may be triggered by another sleep disorder, such as obstructive sleep apnoea or insomnia. Certain parasomnias may be associated with other medical conditions, such as anxiety or Parkinson's Disease. If your sleep specialist thinks that your parasomnia may be linked to another medical condition, they will discuss this with you and may ask your GP to refer you to another specialist.

How are parasomnias diagnosed?

The sleep specialist will ask you about your symptoms. If you have someone who has seen your symptoms while you were asleep, it may be helpful if they attend your appointment with you. Depending on your case, further tests may be done.

Are parasomnias dangerous?

While parasomnias may be unpleasant, they are usually short-lived, and the risk of injury can be reduced (please see below).

What treatment is available?

Parasomnias can usually be reduced by lifestyle changes aimed at improving your sleep quality. It is important not to drink alcohol excessively and to keep a regular sleeping pattern. Your sleep specialist will advise you further.

It is important to consider your sleep environment. This may involve locking bedroom windows and doors and padding any hard or sharp furniture edges to keep you safe from harm.

Your sleep specialist may suggest cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) if your parasomnia is linked to anxiety or insomnia. This may be carried out by online or face-to-face appointments, depending on the services available in your local area.

Medication is only required in rare cases. If you are prescribed medication, please only take it as directed by your sleep specialist or health practitioner. It may affect your ability to drive safely and may interact with alcohol.

Could my parasomnias be due to my medication?

Please let your GP or sleep specialist know if you are on or about to start any medication to control symptoms of depression, anxiety, or are taking sleeping tablets. In some cases, these medications may trigger parasomnias.

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:
imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

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