



SOME FACTS ON RESTLESS LEGS SYNDROME

(RLS)

Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS) is a disorder that causes uncomfortable or unpleasant feelings in the legs. People with RLS describe these sensations as a deep aching or burning, a “creepy crawly” feeling, or a jittery, unsettled feeling in their legs. If you have RLS, these feelings will cause you to have a very strong urge to move your legs to get some relief.

RLS is usually worse when you’re at rest, like when you’re sitting in a dialysis chair or when you’re trying to sleep at night. RLS can make people cut their dialysis time short, so they don’t get enough treatment. It can also keep you from falling asleep or wake you up. People with RLS are often very tired during the day because they don’t get enough sleep at night.

What causes RLS?

Doctors aren’t sure what causes RLS. About 25% to 40% of people on dialysis have it. If you’re over 50 or you have a family history of RLS, you’re more likely to get it. Besides kidney disease, RLS has also been linked to

- Low blood iron levels
- Anemia (low red blood cell count)
- Vitamin deficiency
- Inadequate dialysis
- The use of alcohol, caffeine, and tobacco
- Some types of arthritis
- Pregnancy

How is RLS diagnosed?

There is no specific test for RLS. Your doctor will diagnose it based on your symptoms, so be sure to make note of them. What do the sensations in your legs feel like? When do they happen? What makes them better or worse?

It will help your doctor if you understand the difference between RLS and nerve pain. Nerve pain can also occur in people with kidney disease, but it's not worse at night and it's not made better by movement.

How is RLS treated?

The treatments for RLS focus on minimizing or controlling the symptoms:

- Make sure you get enough dialysis.
- Regular moderate exercise may improve symptoms of RLS and may also lead better sleep at night.
- Try a hot or cold bath or a leg rub to see if it helps soothe you.
- Eat balanced meals, and take a multivitamin that is for patients receiving dialysis and approved by your doctor.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol and smoking.
- Ask your doctor for a blood test to make sure your iron level and red blood cells are high enough.
- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about medications that can help.

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