

Narcolepsy is defined as a neurological disorder that affects the control of sleep and wakefulness. People with narcolepsy experience excessive daytime sleepiness (EDS) and uncontrollable episodes of falling asleep during the daytime. Statistics show that there are an estimated 200,000 Americans suffering from Narcolepsy. Less than 50,000 of the above mentioned 200,000 were properly diagnosed. Studies also show that of those suffering, 8 to 12% have a close relative with the disease.¹

Some of the main symptoms of Narcolepsy are:

❖ **Excessive Daytime Sleepiness**

- After a full night sleep, you awake still feeling tired. Even with taking a nap, you may still experience fatigue.

❖ **Hallucinations**

- Narcolepsy sufferers may experience vivid hallucinations at sleep onset. These hallucinations usually last a few seconds or minutes.

❖ **Sleep Paralysis**

- Sufferers may experience paralysis upon falling asleep or waking up. This episode will usually last a few seconds or minutes.

❖ **Disturbed Nighttime Sleep**

- Sleep is disturbed due to frequently waking through the night.

❖ **Memory Problems**

- You may experience memory problems due to not receiving an adequate amount of sleep each night.

❖ **Sudden Loss in Muscle Tone (Cataplexy)**

- Sudden loss in muscle tone only occurs for those that suffer from Narcolepsy with Cataplexy. Cataplexy can cause slurred speech, lost of control of limbs and some may become completely paralyzed. Cataplexy is usually brought on by strong emotions (i.e. excitement, sadness and intimacy).

Those with Narcolepsy can also suffer from other sleep disorders such as [Sleep Apnea](#) or REM Sleep Behavior Disorder.

If you think that you may be suffering from Narcolepsy based on the symptoms listed above, it is recommended that you visit your physicians. To help facilitate the conversation with your doctor, here are a list of questions to ask.

- 1) Are there any other sleep disorders or health conditions that could be causing my symptoms?
How do I know this is Narcolepsy and not another issue?
- 2) What specific tests will I need for an accurate diagnosis?
- 3) If I have Narcolepsy what are my treatment options? What medications will need to be prescribed?
- 4) Are there any additional steps/changes that I can take to improve my symptoms?
- 5) Are there available support groups or resources for me?
- 6) What suggestions do you have for me to improve my experiences at work/school?

There is currently no cure for Narcolepsy, but the sleep disorder is manageable with the right medications. It may take some time for your sleep physicians to find the right treatment for you.

¹ Arthur Schoenstadt, MD (January 18, 2017) Sleep.emedtv.com