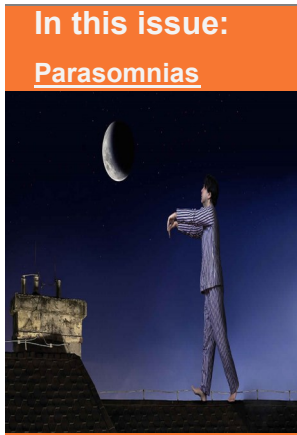




MONTHLY MENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER

Presented by the Gwinnett County Sheriff's Office Mental Health Tasks



In this issue: Parasomnias

What is Parasomnia?

For people with parasomnias, sleep is not so restful. Parasomnias occur somewhere between sleep and wakefulness. A person with parasomnias may seem to be alert, walking or talking or eating or doing other activities, but they are not aware of it because the brain is not completely awake. Some persons with parasomnias may experience sleep terrors or sleep paralysis—these are also a result of the brain being slightly more conscious than usual during sleep.

What Parasomnia may look like:

- Difficulty sleeping through the night.
- Waking up confused or disoriented.
- Being tired during the day.
- Finding cuts and bruises on your body and you have no idea how you got them.
- Displaying movements, expressions, vocalizations or activities – (as told to you by an observer of your sleeping activity)—that you don't remember.
- The symptoms listed above are considered a few of the diagnostic indicators of parasomnia, but all other physical medical illnesses and substance-use must be ruled out first before making the diagnosis.

Parasomnia takes many forms and happens at different times...

Parasomnias occur due to abnormal transitions between the different phases of sleep such as non-rapid eye movement (NREM) to rapid eye movement (REM), and on to wakefulness phases.

Though there may be periods of dissociation or even overlap, Parasomnias are divided into different categories: NREM sleep disorders, REM sleep disorders, and a third category is labeled "other parasomnias".

NREM sleep disorders include: **confusion at arousals, sleepwalking, and sleep terrors**

REM sleep disorders include: **nightmare disorder, REM sleep behavior disorder** which may include **sleep walking, and other physical activities that appear organized, as well as isolated sleep paralysis** (awake but paralyzed and unable to move, may be with or without hallucinations)

Other parasomnias include: **exploding head syndrome** (when one hears a loud noise or explosion in their head that is not real and no one else hears it) usually happens just before falling asleep or when waking during the night, **sleep enuresis (bed wetting), sleep-related groaning (catathrenia), sleep-related hallucinations, and sleep-related eating syndrome** (when one prepares and eats food while sleeping)

Causes and Treatment of Parasomnias

Certain risk factors could make you more susceptible to developing parasomnia. They include; *A family history of parasomnias, Insomnia, Taking certain medications such as antidepressants and antipsychotics, Having certain medical conditions such as sleep apnea or restless leg syndrome, Having a history of mental health disorders, Having a neurodegenerative disease like Parkinson's disease or Lewy Body Dementia, Sleep deprivation, Alcohol or substance abuse.*

Treatment starts with identifying and treating other sleep problems and any other health issues as well as reviewing medications that may trigger the parasomnia.

General management strategies for both Non-REM and REM sleep disorders are to:

Follow good sleep hygiene habits such as (get 7-9 hours of sleep/night; turn off lights, TV and electronic devices; keep room temperature cool; avoid caffeine and strenuous exercise near bedtime.)

Maintain your regular sleep-wake schedule. Have a consistent bed time and wake up time.

Limit, or don't use, alcohol or recreational drugs.

Take all prescribed medications as directed by your healthcare provider.

Medication is not usually prescribed for non-REM parasomnias. However, when they are used, benzodiazepines are the medications of choice for parasomnias that are long lasting or **potentially harmful**. Tricyclic antidepressants are also sometimes used. Psychological approaches (such as hypnosis, relaxation therapy or cognitive behavioral therapy) are also considered. Please note that the use of benzodiazepines can be addictive and harmful if misused.

REFERENCES

The G.C.S.O. Mental Health Tasks Force encourages you to utilize the sources listed below and the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) at www.samhsa.gov** to learn more about this and other important mental health topics.

Diagnostic Statistical Manual –V, American Psychiatric Association, Washington, DC. June 2013

https://www.hopkinsguides.com/hopkins/view/Johns_Hopkins_Psychiatry_Guide/787087/all/Parasomnias

<https://www.yalemedicine.org/conditions/parasomnias>

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