

# What is Narcolepsy?

**Narcolepsy is a sleep disorder**, involving irregular patterns in Rapid Eye Movement (REM) Sleep and significant disruptions of the normal sleep/wake cycle. Narcolepsy is defined as a **rare disease**, affecting fewer than **200,000** individuals in the U.S. Unfortunately, many individuals with narcolepsy remain undiagnosed and untreated.

## Quick Facts

**1** in every **2,000** people in the U.S. has narcolepsy

Major symptom is excessive daytime sleepiness

**25%** of people in the U.S. carry the genetic marker for narcolepsy

Onset of symptoms is between **10-17** years old

People with narcolepsy feel as though they haven't slept for **48-72** hours

**60%** of individuals with narcolepsy also have cataplexy, also a rare disorder, which is characterized by sudden episodes of muscle weakness or complete collapse often triggered by laughter, surprise, or other strong emotions

## Misdiagnosis is Common

**7** years is the average time between symptom onset and diagnosis

**60%** of patients in a recent study were originally misdiagnosed

**25%** of people who have narcolepsy are diagnosed and receiving treatment

## Is There a Treatment for Narcolepsy?

Narcolepsy has no cure. However, medicines, lifestyle changes, and other therapies can reduce many of its symptoms.

## Why is Narcolepsy Hard to Diagnose?

Narcolepsy can be difficult to diagnose because some of its symptoms, such as sleepiness, are common to many conditions.

Symptoms of narcolepsy can include:

- Excessive daytime sleepiness
- Sleep attacks
- Cataplexy
- Sleep paralysis
- Hallucinations while falling asleep or upon awakening
- Disrupted nighttime sleep

## Diagnosis

Physicians and sleep specialists may use the following methods to diagnose narcolepsy:

- **Nocturnal polysomnogram (PSG or sleep study)**  
Measures the electrical activity of your brain and heart, and the movement of your muscles and eyes
- **Multiple sleep latency test (MSLT)**  
Measures how long it takes for you to fall asleep during the day
- **Spinal fluid analysis**  
Can determine a diagnosis of narcolepsy