

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