

# Natural Help 4...

## Restless Leg Syndrome



### What is Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS)?

Restless leg syndrome is a condition in which your **legs experience an unpleasant sensation causing an irresistible urge to move them** – often during sleep or when trying to fall asleep or when at rest, either lying or sitting down. By moving the legs, the uncomfortable sensation eases and goes away temporarily. Restless leg syndrome may also occur in the arms. This condition can disrupt [sleep routines](#), most frequently during the evening or early part of the night, making it hard to fall asleep and stay asleep.

Usually when [symptoms of RLS worsen at night](#), it leads to [insomnia](#). Because people with RLS struggle to get enough sleep as a result of persistent leg movements, they often experience daytime drowsiness. Consequently, RLS can affect your [concentration](#), ability to travel, performance at work, interaction with family and friends, daily and social activities. It can also affect your mood, lead to [mood swings](#) and bring about [depression](#).

[Restless leg syndrome](#) occurs more frequently in women, especially during the last months of pregnancy. It can, however affect both men and women. People with RLS are generally diagnosed in middle age, but there are often cases with symptoms of RLS beginning before age 20. This condition also tends to run in families.

### Types of RLS

There are two types of RLS, primary RLS and secondary RLS.

**Primary RLS** is also referred to as idiopathic RLS. With primary RLS, the cause is unknown and once it starts, it becomes a lifelong condition. Over time, symptoms tend to get worse and occur more frequently – particularly, if symptoms began in childhood or early in adult life. In mild cases of RLS, when you are still or awake for a long time like on a lengthy airplane trip, symptoms may last for a limited period or there may be long periods of time without symptoms.

**Secondary RLS** is caused by an underlying condition or disease, or from taking certain medications. In most cases, symptoms disappear when the condition or disease is controlled or the medication is stopped.

Most people suffering from RLS also develop a condition called periodic limb movement disorder (PLMD). PLMD is a condition in which a person experiences involuntary, rhythmic limb movements such as jerking and twitching, while awake or asleep. While RLS disturbs sleep by delaying sleep, PLMD causes repeated awakenings that disturb or reduce sleep. People with PLMD are sometimes not even aware of their symptoms until a bed partner brings it to their attention.

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Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read in this ebook or on ANY website.

## Diagnosing Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS)

The **diagnosis of RLS depends largely on the description of your symptoms**. Your doctor will take a complete medical history as well as perform a thorough physical examination. During the physical examination, your doctor will **identify any underlying condition** that may cause RLS and also be able to rule out other disorders.

Special attention will be given to the nerves in your spinal cord, legs and arms and the **blood flow in your legs and arms**. In addition, blood tests may be performed to check for underlying conditions such as iron deficiency, [diabetes](#), kidney disease, vitamin or mineral deficiencies that may cause RLS.

## Symptoms

The most common [symptoms of RLS](#) include:

- Unpleasant, irritating sensation in the legs. Sensations are often described as tingling, pulling, crawling or creeping and may be felt in the calf area, upper leg, feet, arms or hands
- Irresistible urge to move legs or arms when sitting or lying down
- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep because of the unpleasant sensations in legs or arms
- Daytime sleepiness as a result of a lack of peaceful sleep due to repeated limb movements
- Very often, people ignore the symptoms of RLS and dismiss them as muscle aches or restlessness. For this reason, RLS is frequently misdiagnosed and left untreated, resulting in insomnia, daytime sleepiness and restlessness

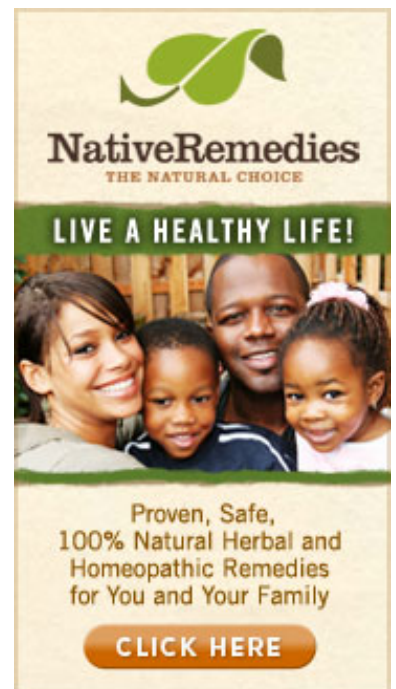
## What Causes Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS)?

In most cases of restless leg syndrome, no cause can be found. Primary RLS refers to this condition when no cause can be found. However, studies have shown that **primary restless leg syndrome tends to run in families**, which may suggest that there may be a genetic link that increases the chance of developing the condition.

**Secondary RLS is RLS that is caused by an underlying condition** or as a side effect from certain medications.


Some of the conditions and diseases that are associated with RLS include:

- Iron deficiency
- Anemia
- Peripheral neuropathy
- [Nerve disorders](#)
- Kidney failure
- [Diabetes](#)
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### Michele Carelse, Clinical Psychologist



All of our natural remedies are formulated by our expert team of herbalists, naturopaths and homeopaths, and headed by Michele Carelse.

Michele has had years of experience in the manufacturing and use of natural remedies. In addition, she is a trained Clinical Psychologist and has been incorporating natural remedies into her treatment of patients with depression, anxiety, ADD, ADHD and stress for many years with spectacular results.

- [Sleep apnea](#)
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- Pregnancy

## Help for Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS)

Because there is no cure for RLS, the **primary aim of treatment is to relieve symptoms**, increase the amount and quality of sleep, and treat or correct any underlying condition that may cause RLS. Some drugs and medications that are associated with RLS include caffeine, alcohol, antihistamine blockers, anti-seizure medicines, anti-nausea medicines, and certain antidepressants.

If symptoms are mild, **implementing a few lifestyle changes** such as eliminating caffeine, stopping smoking, getting better sleep and more exercise may be quite beneficial. In more severe cases where RLS interferes with sleep or daily activities, certain medications are effective. Other treatment options that may be considered include electric nerve stimulation, oral magnesium supplementation, acupuncture, warm or cold baths.

## Natural Remedies

For centuries, natural and holistic approaches have provided **long-term relief for restless leg syndrome sufferers**. Herbal and homeopathic remedies contain a combination of ingredients that promotes calm, rested limbs during sleep. A well known herb, Astragalus membranaceous, has been used for centuries in traditional Chinese medicine, and balances and improves the functioning of all the body's organ systems through its adaptogenic and tonic properties. It also boosts circulation and assists absorption of iron from food.

Ruscus aculeatus, also known as Butcher's Broom improves [poor circulation](#) and relieves the pain and discomfort associated with restless leg syndrome. It is also useful in treatment of [constipation](#) and [water retention](#), [circulatory disorders](#) including [hemorrhoids](#) and [varicose veins](#) and as a bladder and kidney tonic. In addition, Aesculus hippocastum (Horse Chestnut) helps **promote healthy blood circulation** throughout the body, including the legs and can relieve Periodic Limb Movement and RLS by keeping the blood flowing smoothly even during and sleep and rest.

## Self-help tips for restless leg syndrome

Although restless leg syndrome is a life-long condition, there are many coping strategies that you can develop.

- Follow a moderate exercise program which includes walking or jogging, but remember not to overdo it or exercise late during the day
- Stretch your legs, bend your knee and rotate your ankles during and at the end of the day
- Massage your legs to help you relax and soothe restless sensations

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- Wear compression stockings, tight pantyhose or wrap legs in ace bandages to relieve symptoms
- Increase your intake of iron supplements if your iron levels are low
- Practice relaxation techniques such as meditation, yoga or deep breathing
- Reduce caffeine, alcohol and tobacco intake
- Keep a sleep diary to monitor the effects of medication and strategies of RLS
- Soak feet in hot water or apply a heating pad or cold compress to affected area
- Maintain a regular sleep schedule by going to bed at the same time every night and every morning
- Lie on your side with a pillow between your knees to initiate sleep
- Join a support group where you can share information with others who are also suffering from RLS

## The Natural Approach

While Western medicine has become the norm in many cultures, it is not the only treatment option. Conventional western medicine, often called allopathic medicine, is the system of medicine taught at most medical schools and most pharmaceutical and synthetic medicines are manufactured and marketed according to the principles of allopathic medicine. Allopathic medicine is also sometimes called orthodox medicine.

Because most of us in the Western world have grown up in a society in which allopathic medicine is the prevailing norm, we forget that, only a few decades ago, homeopathic, herbal and other natural medicines were commonly available – and freely used even by conventional doctors. While there are often heated debates about which system of medicine is ‘better’ than the other, many responsible doctors (whether they are allopathic or not) recognize that both have a role to play in the treatment program.

Natural medicine has often been frowned on by conventional doctors, especially by those who did not have sufficient knowledge of these medicines. However, it is encouraging to note that some medical schools are now beginning to re-introduce it into their course work, thereby providing doctors with a wider range of treatment options from which to choose. In many countries, especially in Europe, India and China, natural and homeopathic medicines are commonly prescribed by conventional doctors and represent a significant part of the total annual drug sales.

Naturopathy is a branch of medicine (just as allopathy is a branch of medicine) which operates according to the underlying philosophy that the body has an innate capacity to heal itself. While natural medicines are often called ‘alternative’ or ‘complimentary’ medicines, they are, in fact, a unique and independent form of medicine in their own right, well able to treat a variety of conditions. Perhaps the term ‘holistic’ medicine is more apt, given the broad range of treatment options and approaches which are to be found within the practice of natural medicine, which encompasses many different disciplines, including herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, osteopathy, chiropractic, therapeutic massage techniques, aromatherapy, acupuncture and many, many more.

Most naturopaths will use a variety of treatment modalities in order to treat their patients in a holistic way to support health, relieve symptoms and prevent future disease. In fact, even the World Health Organization defines health as being "... more than simply the absence of illness. It is the active state of physical, emotional,



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mental and social well-being." This is a wonderfully clear description of holistic or natural medicine, which strives to support health (thereby relieving or preventing symptoms), rather than simply eliminating disease.

Although allopathic medicine certainly has a role to play and has made a tremendous contribution to medical science during the past century, there is a growing perception that it is not the only answer and that, in many cases, holistic medicine can accomplish just as much, if not more – without the risk of side effects, addiction and sacrifice to health so commonly associated with pharmaceutical drugs. Contrary to common perception, and provided that they are manufactured in the correct way, natural medicines can work quickly and safely to promote healing.

In many cases, they can succeed where pharmaceutical drugs have failed. Despite frequent reports that they are ‘unproven’ and ‘untested’, the opposite is true. Natural medicines have a long history of usage and there is a wealth of empirical evidence to support their effectiveness and safety. In addition, active clinical research is carried out by many academic hospitals and universities to support the extensive traditional and empirical evidence behind natural medicines.

It is also important to know that, like any medicine, herbal and homeopathic medicines must be manufactured in the correct way, following acceptable procedures and manufacturing methods to ensure maximum effectiveness and safety. Due to the recent rise in popularity of natural remedies, many companies have sprung up to take advantage of the market. Unfortunately not all of them are equipped to manufacture to the correct standards, often resulting in a flood of inferior (and sometimes even unsafe) remedies onto the market – and giving natural remedies a bad name.

Even some pharmaceutical companies have rushed to claim their market share by producing so-called ‘standardized’ extracts of herbs and offering these as superior to the tried and tested methods of naturopathic manufacturing. Nothing could be further from the truth. While ‘standardized’ extracts may offer benefit of easy consistency of dosage (and cheaper more efficient production lines), they have grave disadvantages. These include an increase in side effects as the medicines produced in this manner lose the natural protective properties of the herbs. In some cases, these side effects have proved fatal – as was seen in the liver toxicity associated with standardized extracts of kava kava, a herb previously safely used for generations without any known side effects.

Most naturopaths recommend what is called the Full Spectrum Method of extraction – which retains the benefits of ALL the active ingredients within the herb as opposed to isolating only one – thereby providing a more complete treatment as well as superior protection against side effects.

Whatever your choice, always choose wisely. Research what is best for you. If you have a chronic or life threatening condition, don’t make changes without first discussing them with your doctor in order that your condition may be monitored. Well informed and supportive practitioners will support patients who want to take responsibility for their own health.

## **Related Natural Remedies:**

**LegCalm:** Supports circulation and comfort to the legs and limbs to maintain still

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