



TIPS

for Coping With Restless Legs Syndrome

Persons who experience restless legs syndrome may have other colorfully descriptive names for it, but essentially it is an uncomfortable sensation in the legs that is relieved by movement. It is a central nervous system disorder that can interfere with resting or sleep. For some, self-help tips may decrease the discomfort; for others, more treatment is necessary. If an overwhelming urge to move your affected limbs keeps you from resting or sleeping, try these self-care tips:

- ❑ **Relax.** Try relaxation techniques such as meditation, yoga, or deep breathing.
- ❑ **Exercise.** Moderate, regular exercise may relieve symptoms, but go easy. Over-exercising may intensify symptoms.
- ❑ **Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine.** Use of these substances may increase symptoms. Reducing or eliminating them, especially before bedtime, may improve symptoms.
- ❑ **Stretch.** Begin and end your day with gentle stretching exercises and/or gentle massage.
- ❑ **Take a bath.** Soaking in a warm bath and massaging your legs may help relax your muscles.
- ❑ **Establish a sleep routine.** Good sleep hygiene involves having a cool, quiet, and comfortable sleeping environment, going to bed at the same time each night, waking at the same time each morning, and getting enough sleep to feel well rested.
- ❑ **Don't fight the urge to move.** Trying to resist the urge to move may make symptoms worse.
- ❑ **Apply heat or cold.** Try alternating hot and cold packs to lessen symptoms.
- ❑ **Try a pain reliever.** OTC pain relievers may reduce mild tingling; for more severe symptoms, talk with your doctor. Prescription medication is available.
- ❑ **Keep a sleep diary.** Keep track of all the medications and strategies you've used to battle your symptoms. Share that data with your doctor.
- ❑ **Get enough iron.** Have your iron levels checked. Take iron supplements if your iron is low.

Additional Tips for Patients are available for download at www.neurologyreviews.com