



# Hypersomnia (Excessive Daytime Sleepiness)



Hypersomnia is the inability to stay awake and alert during the daytime, resulting in periods of irresistible need for sleep. It can result from sleep deprivation or a sleep disorder, such as narcolepsy. Narcolepsy is a neurological disorder characterized by sudden and uncontrollable episodes of excessive daytime sleepiness, often accompanied by brief losses of muscle tone (cataplexy) and disruptions in REM sleep. People may not know they have a sleep disorder until it starts affecting their day-to-day life, work and school activities.

## What are the symptoms of narcolepsy?

There are five primary symptoms of narcolepsy, including:

1. Excessive daytime sleepiness (sudden, irresistible sleep episodes or “sleep attacks”)
2. Sleep paralysis (unable to move for a brief period in bed, though awake and able to look around)
3. Hypnagogic hallucination (seeing images or hearing sounds as you’re falling asleep)
4. Cataplexy (becoming suddenly weak in the legs or anywhere else after laughing or being surprised by something)
5. Disrupted nighttime sleep with frequent awakenings

## How is narcolepsy diagnosed?

If you think your child is suffering from narcolepsy, please consult our sleep specialist. After a thorough medical history and exam, we may order an overnight sleep study to observe your child’s nighttime sleep in detail and rule out other sleep disorders that can disturb sleep.

Following the nighttime study, we will schedule a daytime nap test to see how quickly your child can fall asleep during naptime.



## How is narcolepsy treated?

There is no cure for narcolepsy; however, medications for excessive daytime sleepiness and/or cataplexy may help. Additional methods to help a child with narcolepsy include:

- Patient and family education
- Extra support in school
- Healthy sleep habits
- Scheduled short naps

## Resources

<https://aasm.org/clinical-resources/patient-info/>

<https://sleepeducation.org/patients/>

<https://sleepeducation.org/healthy-sleep/>

<https://sleepeducation.org/sleep-disorders/>



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