



This article is by Dr Sara McNellis, Clinical Lead Consultant for the Sleep service at the Royal National ENT and ED Hospital at UCLH NHS Foundation Trust. Chief Medical Officer; Principal Consultant (Founder) Sleep and Health Clinic Ltd, covers common sleep disorders that cause degradation of wellbeing.

Sleep disorders encompass a range of conditions that affect the quality, timing, and amount of sleep, leading to daytime distress and impairment in functioning. Here's an overview of some common sleep disorders:

### ### 1. Insomnia

**\*\*Description:\*\*** Difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking up too early and not being able to get back to sleep.

**\*\*Symptoms:\*\*** Trouble falling asleep, frequent awakenings during the night, waking up too early, daytime fatigue, irritability, and concentration problems.

### ### 2. Sleep Apnea

**\*\*Description:\*\*** A serious disorder where breathing repeatedly stops and starts during sleep.

**\*\*Types:\*\***

- **\*\*Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA):\*\*** Caused by the relaxation of throat muscles.

- **\*\*Central Sleep Apnea:\*\*** Occurs when the brain doesn't send proper signals to the muscles that control breathing.

**\*\*Symptoms:\*\*** Loud snoring, episodes of stopped breathing, gasping for air during sleep, dry mouth, morning headache, insomnia, excessive daytime sleepiness.

### ### 3. Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS)

**\*\*Description:\*\*** A condition characterized by an uncontrollable urge to move the legs, usually because of an uncomfortable sensation.



**\*\*Symptoms:\*\*** Leg discomfort often described as creeping, crawling, pulling, throbbing, or itching, which improves with movement, especially in the evening or night.

#### ### 4. Narcolepsy

**\*\*Description:\*\*** A chronic sleep disorder characterized by overwhelming daytime drowsiness and sudden attacks of sleep.

**\*\*Symptoms:\*\*** Excessive daytime sleepiness, sudden loss of muscle tone (cataplexy), sleep paralysis, hallucinations.

#### ### 5. Circadian Rhythm Disorders

**\*\*Description:\*\*** Disorders where there is a mismatch between the body's internal clock and the external environment.

**\*\*Types:\*\***

- **\*\*Delayed Sleep Phase Disorder:\*\*** Falling asleep and waking up much later than usual.
- **\*\*Advanced Sleep Phase Disorder:\*\*** Falling asleep and waking up much earlier than usual.
- **\*\*Shift Work Disorder:\*\*** Insomnia or excessive sleepiness due to working nontraditional hours.
- **\*\*Jet Lag:\*\*** Temporary disruption of sleep patterns due to crossing multiple time zones.

#### ### 6. Parasomnias

**\*\*Description:\*\*** Involves abnormal behaviors during sleep.

**\*\*Types:\*\***

- **\*\*Sleepwalking (Somnambulism):\*\*** Performing activities while asleep, such as walking.
- **\*\*Sleep Talking (Somniloquy):\*\*** Talking during sleep.
- **\*\*Night Terrors:\*\*** Episodes of screaming, intense fear, and flailing while still asleep.
- **\*\*REM Sleep Behavior Disorder:\*\*** Acting out dreams during REM sleep.

#### ### 7. Sleep-Related Movement Disorders

**\*\*Description:\*\*** Involuntary movements during sleep.



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## **\*\*Types:\*\***

- **\*\*Periodic Limb Movement Disorder (PLMD):\*\*** Repetitive cramping or jerking of the legs during sleep.
- **\*\*Bruxism:\*\*** Grinding or clenching of the teeth during sleep.

## **### Diagnosis and Treatment**

Diagnosis typically involves a combination of:

- **\*\*Medical history and sleep diaries\*\***
- **\*\*Physical examinations\*\***
- **\*\*Polysomnography (sleep study)\*\***
- **\*\*Home sleep tests\*\***

**\*\*Treatment options\*\*** vary based on the disorder but can include:

- **\*\*Lifestyle changes and sleep hygiene:\*\*** Establishing a regular sleep schedule, creating a restful sleeping environment, avoiding caffeine and electronics before bed.
- **\*\*Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT):\*\*** Especially for insomnia.
- **\*\*Medications:\*\*** Such as sleeping pills, stimulants, or medication for underlying conditions.
- **\*\*Medical devices:\*\*** Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) for sleep apnea.
- **\*\*Surgery:\*\*** In severe cases of sleep apnea.

Understanding the specific type of sleep disorder is crucial for effective treatment and management, as each type may require a different approach.