



Causes, Symptoms and Treatment of Night Terrors

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Description

Night terrors, also known as sleep terrors, are a type of parasomnia sleep disorder characterized by sudden and intense episodes of fear, agitation and arousal during sleep. Night terrors typically occur during the first half of the night and can be distressing for both the individual experiencing them and their loved ones.

Causes of night terrors

The exact cause of night terrors is not fully understood, but they are believed to involve a combination of genetic, neurological and environmental factors. Night terrors are more common in children and tend to decrease in frequency as they grow older. In some cases, night terrors may be associated with other sleep disorders, such as sleep apnea or restless leg syndrome.

Symptoms of night terrors

During a night terror episode, the individual may suddenly sit up in bed, scream, thrash around and exhibit signs of extreme fear and distress. They may appear confused, have a rapid heart rate and may not respond to attempts to comfort or console them. Unlike nightmares, which occur during Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep and are often vividly recalled, night terrors occur during Non-Rapid Eye Movement (NREM) sleep and are usually not remembered by the individual.

Management of night terrors

Night terrors generally do not require medical treatment unless they are causing significant distress or disruption to the individual's sleep or daily functioning. However, there are some strategies that may help manage night terrors:

Creating a secure sleeping environment: Eliminating potential dangers from the bedroom, such as protruding furniture or sharp objects, can assist avoid injury during a night terror episode.

Establishing a consistent sleep routine: Following a regular sleep schedule and establishing a calming bedtime routine can help improve the quality of sleep and reduce the frequency of night terrors.

Addressing underlying sleep disorders: If night terrors are associated with other sleep disorders, such as sleep apnea or restless leg syndrome, treating the underlying condition may help reduce the occurrence of night terrors.

Providing reassurance and comfort: During a night terror episode, it is important to remain calm and provide reassurance to the individual without attempting to wake them up, as this may prolong the episode. After the episode, offering comfort and support can help the individual feel secure and reduce anxiety about future episodes.

Seeking professional help: If night terrors are causing significant distress or impairment in daily functioning, consulting a healthcare professional, such as a sleep specialist or psychologist, may be beneficial. They can assess the individual's sleep patterns, provide further evaluation and recommend appropriate interventions or therapies.

Conclusion

Night terrors are a type of sleep disorder that can cause sudden and intense episodes of fear and distress during sleep. While the exact cause of night terrors is not fully understood, there are management strategies that can help reduce their frequency and impact on daily functioning. By creating a safe sleep environment, establishing a consistent sleep routine, addressing underlying sleep disorders, providing reassurance and comfort and seeking professional help when needed, individuals experiencing night terrors can effectively manage their condition and improve their sleep quality and overall well-being.

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