



Confusional Arousal: Complexity to the Spectrum of Sleep Disturbances

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Description

Confusional arousal, a sleep-related disorder characterized by a state of partial awakening accompanied by disorientation and confusion, adds a layer of complexity to the spectrum of sleep disturbances. Also known as sleep drunkenness or sleep inertia, confusional arousal manifests as a person transitions between sleep and wakefulness, leaving them temporarily disoriented, slow to react, and often confused. This explores the intricacies of confusional arousal, including its symptoms, potential causes, and management strategies, shedding light on this lesser-known but impactful sleep phenomenon.

Confusional arousal typically occurs during the transition between sleep stages, especially from deep sleep to a lighter sleep stage or wakefulness. This can lead to a state of partial arousal where the person experiences confusion and disorientation. Episodes of confusional arousal are often brief, lasting anywhere from a few seconds to a couple of minutes. While they may be relatively short-lived, these episodes can be disconcerting for both the individual experiencing them and anyone witnessing the behavior.

Symptoms of confusional arousal

Individuals experiencing confusional arousal often display a state of disorientation, with delayed responses to stimuli and a lack of awareness of their surroundings. Motor coordination may be impaired during episodes, leading to slow and clumsy movements. This can contribute to an appearance of sleep inertia, resembling the grogginess felt upon waking. Responses to questions or attempts to engage the person during confusional arousal may be minimal or absent. Communication may be challenging as the individual grapples with a temporary cognitive fog. In some cases, individuals may exhibit inappropriate behavior during confusional arousal, such as confusion

about the location of objects, difficulty completing familiar tasks, or engaging in activities without a clear purpose.

Potential causes of confusional arousal

Lack of sufficient sleep or chronic sleep deprivation can contribute to the occurrence of confusional arousal. Disruptions in the normal sleep-wake cycle may lead to a higher likelihood of partial awakenings with associated confusion. Conditions such as insomnia, sleep apnea, or other sleep-related disorders can increase the risk of confusional arousal. The underlying sleep disturbance disrupts the smooth progression through sleep stages. Elevated stress levels and anxiety can impact sleep quality and contribute to fragmented sleep. Confusional arousal may be more prevalent in individuals experiencing high levels of stress or anxiety. Certain medications, including sedatives and sleep aids, may influence sleep architecture and contribute to confusional arousal. Substance use, including alcohol, can also disrupt sleep and contribute to episodes of partial arousal.

Management and coping strategies

Prioritize getting sufficient and consistent sleep each night. Establish a regular sleep schedule and create a sleep-conducive environment to support overall sleep quality. If confusional arousal is suspected to be associated with an underlying sleep disorder, seek evaluation and treatment from a healthcare professional. Addressing the root cause can contribute to improved sleep quality. Practice stress-reduction techniques such as mindfulness, deep breathing, or relaxation exercises to manage stress and anxiety levels, promoting more restful sleep. Consult with a healthcare provider to review medications that may impact sleep. Adjusting medication regimens, especially those with potential sleep-disrupting side effects, may help alleviate confusional arousal. Establish a calming bedtime routine to signal to the body that it is time to wind down.

Conclusion

Confusional arousal adds a layer of complexity to the understanding of sleep-related disorders, highlighting the nuances of transitions between sleep stages. While episodes of sleep drunkenness can be disconcerting, especially for those experiencing them, recognizing potential contributing factors and implementing targeted management strategies can significantly improve sleep quality and overall well-being. By addressing underlying causes and adopting healthy sleep practices, individuals can navigate the fog of confusional arousal and embrace restful and rejuvenating sleep. Minimize exposure to screens before bedtime, and engage in relaxing activities to promote a smooth transition to sleep. If confusional arousal persists or significantly impacts daily functioning, consider seeking guidance from a sleep specialist. A thorough evaluation can help identify contributing factors and tailor an appropriate treatment plan.

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