Fidgety Feelings

When staying still is a problem

June 4, 2018 By Kate Ferguson

Pulling, aching, throbbing, itchy sensations accompanied by an irresistible urge to move the legs or arms may indicate a case of restless legs syndrome (RLS), aka Willis-Ekbom disease. Of U.S. adults responding to a National Sleep Foundation poll, 15 percent reported experiencing these annoying issues.

Usually, symptoms of RLS occur in the late afternoon or evening hours and are most severe at night when a person is sitting or lying down. These unpleasant sensations can disrupt sleep, mood and concentration and may also happen during periods of extended inactivity, such as when flying or watching a movie. (Typically, walking or moving the legs temporarily relieves the discomfort.)

RLS is classified as both a sleep and movement disorder, but it is also considered a neurological sensory illness related to dysfunction in an area of the brain that controls motion.

But there’s good news: Most cases of RLS can be treated with nondrug therapies and, if necessary, medications.

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