Hypersomnia

Hypersomnia usually brings recurrent episodes of excessive daytime sleepiness or prolonged nighttime sleep. It is different than feeling tired due to lack of or interrupted sleep at night. People with hypersomnia are compelled to nap repeatedly during the day. This is often at inappropriate times such as:

- At work.
- During a meal.
- In conversation.

These daytime naps usually provide no relief. This disorder typically affects adolescents and young adults.

CAUSES

This condition may be caused by:

- Another sleep disorder (such as narcolepsy or sleep apnea).
- Dysfunction of the autonomic nervous system.
- Drug or alcohol abuse.
- A physical problem, such as:
  - A tumor.
  - Head trauma. This is damage caused by an accident.
  - Injury to the central nervous system.
- Certain medications, or medicine withdrawal.
- Medical conditions may contribute to the disorder, including:
  - Multiple sclerosis.
  - Depression.
  - Encephalitis.
  - Epilepsy.
  - Obesity.
- Some people appear to have a genetic predisposition to this disorder. In others, there is no known cause.

SYMPTOMS

- Patients often have difficulty waking from a long sleep. They may feel dazed or confused.
- Other symptoms may include:
  - Anxiety.
  - Increased irritation (inflammation).
  - Decreased energy.
  - Restlessness.
  - Slow thinking.
  - Slow speech.
  - Loss of appetite.
  - Hallucinations.
  - Memory difficulty.
  - Tremors, Tics.
- Some patients lose the ability to function in family, social, occupational, or other settings.

TREATMENT

Treatment is symptomatic in nature. Stimulants and other drugs may be used to treat this disorder. Changes in behavior may help. For example, avoid night work and social activities that delay bed time. Changes in diet may offer some relief. Patients should avoid alcohol and caffeine.

The likely outcome (*prognosis*) for persons with hypersomnia depends on the cause of the disorder. The disorder itself is not life threatening. But it can have serious consequences. For example, automobile accidents can be caused by falling asleep while driving. The attacks usually continue indefinitely.

RESEARCH BEING DONE

The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) supports and conducts research on sleep disorders such as hypersomnia. The goals of this research are to:

- Increase scientific understanding of the condition.
- Find improved methods of diagnosing and treating it.

- Discover ways to prevent it.

Research is continually being done to learn more about this problem.
Provided by: NINDS

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