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Restless Leg Syndrome

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Are you having trouble sleeping or staying asleep? Do your legs ache or burn and twitch either when resting or later on at night? Do you have the overwhelming urge to move your legs when these symptoms show up? If so, you may be suffering from a condition known as Restless Leg Syndrome.

Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS) is defined as a neurological movement disorder characterized by an irresistible urge to move the legs, especially during periods of rest or inactivity. This discomfort or urge to move is usually temporarily relieved by movement, but recurs again with rest. The actual symptoms associated with RLS vary widely from person to person and can be very different in nature, often making it difficult for people to describe. Common descriptions include annoying sensations in the legs such as creeping, crawling, tingling, burning, itching or twitching. People have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep. Family members may suffer from the same symptoms. Spouses often complain of kicking or twitching at night. Sufferers are often very unrested following a bout of RLS. People report these symptoms to be worse at night, when at rest, driving, on a plane, in a theatre or just relaxing. As said before, the sufferer feels the need to move the legs to relieve symptoms.

The condition is found in an estimated 10% of the US population, but varies in severity. RLS can occur at any age but is more prevalent in mid to older people. It is more common in women and may run in the family.

There is a chance that the symptoms of RLS are being caused by underlying issues such as pregnancy, iron deficiency, anemia, or more serious disorders such as chronic kidney disease or renal failure. Some other chronic diseases such as diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis or peripheral neuropathy may also be the culprit. These would be causes of secondary RLS. Primary RLS is much more common and is called primary because its cause is unknown.

Typically, RLS is diagnosed through exclusion, as there is no laboratory tests to confirm diagnosis. Symptoms are the basis for diagnosis and conventional medicine will prescribe medications to control these symptoms. Drug therapy includes Clonazepam, which acts to stabilize nerve function, Zevodapa, which is a Parkinsons' medication or sedatives such as methadone or codeine. Because all of these drugs have undesirable side effects and most people develop a tolerance to them, their risks can outweigh the good they do, especially in the long term.

Alternative therapies include herbal remedies, acupuncture, exercise and avoiding certain foods and medication which may increase symptoms. It is widely believed that there is no cure for RLS and treatment is focused on controlling the symptoms only. However, chiropractic treatments combined with active stretches and exercise, have great clinical success in permanently correcting this problem. Your chiropractor will assess your case and history and examine your spine, pelvis and nervous system. A treatment plan focused on correcting any instability or restrictions in your feet, knees, hips, pelvis and low back will be designed to strengthen and increase mobility as well as circulation in the lower extremities. This type of treatment has been shown to have great clinical success in correcting the symptoms of RLS.