Narcolepsy is a sleep disorder. If you have narcolepsy, you may suddenly, uncontrollably fall asleep at any point during the day. Typically, these “sleep attacks” last between 3-30 minutes. While these episodes of sleep may be brief, they can be very dangerous. For example, if you are driving or doing other potentially risky activities, narcolepsy can be quite dangerous. Narcolepsy can also be hard on your social life and can interfere with your job.

Unfortunately, no one knows exactly what causes some people to have narcolepsy. Research focuses on some genetic markers that many people with narcolepsy share. It appears, however, that there are also some unidentified environmental factors that are involved in the development of this disorder. Other research is examining whether narcolepsy might be an autoimmune disorder. The immune system may attack a specific area in the brain. This area may play an important role in controlling sleep and wakefulness. However, there could be other factors, beyond an autoimmune disorder, that trigger the brain’s sleep control center to degenerate.

According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, narcolepsy occurs in about 1 in 2,000 Americans. The actual number of people affected may be higher than this, though. Narcolepsy is often ignored or mistaken for other disorders, such as depression, epilepsy, or side effects of medicine.

What are the risk factors for narcolepsy?
What are the symptoms of narcolepsy?
How is narcolepsy diagnosed?
What are the treatments for narcolepsy?
Are there screening tests for narcolepsy?
How can I reduce my risk of narcolepsy?
What questions should I ask my doctor?
What is it like to live with narcolepsy?
Where can I get more information about narcolepsy?

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