

# 31/10/04: National Sleep-in day - Are you a sleep walker or talker?

Submitted by: The Bottom Line Consultancy Ltd

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Sleep disorders can occur at any age, although as we get older sleep problems are more likely. In fact, more than 20% of adults will complain of sleep problems at some stage during their life. Sleep problems may not always be as apparent as insomnia. In fact, there are many sleep disorders that occur during sleep that you may not be aware of, but that still disrupt sleep, and therefore leave you tired and un-refreshed the next day.

One form of sleep disorder is a parasomnia:

"...a disorder that interrupts sleep, causing either a partial or complete awakening, or arousal. Some forms of parasomnia also hinder the transition from one sleep stage into another... and are so common that most people don't consider them to be sleep disorders".

([www.about-sleep-disorders.co.uk/html/parasomnias.php3](http://www.about-sleep-disorders.co.uk/html/parasomnias.php3))

You may only be aware of such a sleep disorder from it affecting your partner's sleep on a regular basis! So, are you a walker or a talker?

## SLEEP HABITS

\*Sleep Walker - A sleepwalker will get out of bed and walk around during the night. It is common for the sleepwalker to have a blank stare on their face and not communicate. Once awake, the person rarely remembers any details of their sleepwalking. During the sleepwalking, some people may negotiate stairs, go out of doors, or eat a snack.

Sleepwalking (or Somnambulism), can be triggered by periods of anxiety or stress. In most cases, sleepwalking will stop once the stress/ anxiety goes.

\*Sleep Talker - Many of us occasionally mutter or grunt in our sleep, but it's not that common to speak at any length or frequently. Sleep-talkers can appear to talk quite lucidly, look animated or distressed about whatever they are saying, and may be moving around in the bed at the same time.

Whilst there is no clear cause, it seems to be more common when a person is experiencing high levels of stress.

\*Teeth Grinder - Grinding your teeth, especially when you're asleep, is a common condition that may just be a long-term habit, like nail biting, but it could also be the result of a physical problem related to your 'bite', however "stress, anxiety and anger are the most common causes of jaw clenching in adults." ([www.parasomnias.co.uk/html/teeth-grinding.php3](http://www.parasomnias.co.uk/html/teeth-grinding.php3))

\*Body Jerker – Someone who experiences restless legs syndrome (RLS) or periodic limb movement disorder (PLMD)

RLS is a consistent, uncomfortable feeling in the legs, likened to a creeping sensation under the skin of the leg muscles that can only be alleviated by moving the legs. PLMD causes involuntary leg cramps, or

jerking movements, that occur as often as every twenty seconds.

RLS tends to develop most often after 40 years of age. It is also experienced by 15% of pregnant women, although symptoms generally go after pregnancy. Another possible cause is a mineral deficiency, where supplements may help.

\*Dead Sleeper - Sleep paralysis is a temporary inability to move while dreaming to prevent us from acting out our dreams. In some cases, it occurs as people fall asleep and wake up. In this frightening experience the affected person cannot move or speak for several seconds. An estimated 20 to 25 percent of the population has experienced some degree of sleep paralysis.  
([www.parasomnias.co.uk/html/sleep-paralysis.php3](http://www.parasomnias.co.uk/html/sleep-paralysis.php3))

\*Heavy Breather – is a noisy breather whilst asleep. However, they can still have 'good quality' breathing and therefore a good quality sleep. Heavy breathing is harmless to the sleeper, but irritating for their partner! This form of snoring is more likely if you have a cold, but can also be brought about by sleeping on your back, eating a heavy meal late at night or excessive tiredness.

Such sleep problems are not helped by the fact that a lot of us do not allow ourselves time to prepare for bed (either mentally or physically). Mentally, it's unrealistic to think we can stop running around doing chores or turn off the stimulation of the TV / hi-fi, and then turn out the light and expect to just drop off into a deep sleep! Similarly, physically, we need to establish a routine to help our bodies prepare for bed. 2 We all know that a warm bath in the evening helps you to relax and unwind, easing anxiety and stress.

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For more information, sleep habit graphics or samples contact:

Nicky Garvey

e: [nicky@bottomlineconsultancy.co.uk](mailto:nicky@bottomlineconsultancy.co.uk)

t: 01992 579990