

For more information about:

- Patient services
- Resources
- Membership
- Education
- Research
- Annual patient conferences
- Student accommodations

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*NN is a national
nonprofit organization
whose mission
includes early
diagnosis of
narcolepsy
for optimum
treatment.*

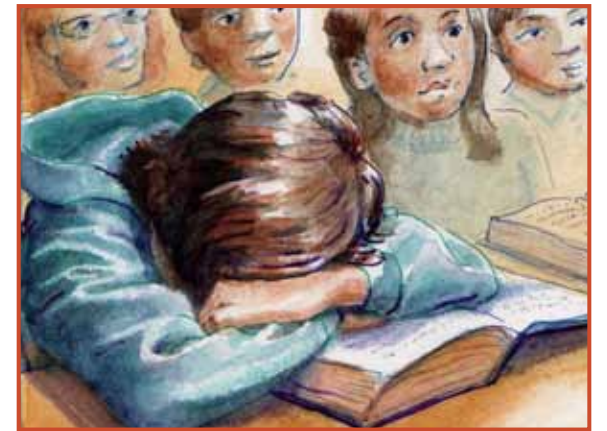
*Narcolepsy is a neurological disorder that
disrupts the individual's sleep/wake cycle.*

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**CONCERNED ABOUT
A SLEEPY STUDENT?**

Narcolepsy
In the classroom



Essential information for all:

School Nurses
School Administrators
Special Education Teams
Parents
Teachers
Students

MYTH:

Children are too young to develop sleep disorders.

FACT:

Narcolepsy often develops by puberty and may worsen over time. The average age of onset is the late teen years. Other sleep disorders can also occur in young children.

Sleepy students in a classroom are not uncommon. However, children with an untreated sleep disorder such as narcolepsy experience uncontrollable, chronic, excessive daytime sleepiness (EDS) that is not resolved by increased sleep time and cannot be overcome without appropriate treatment. These children are at great risk for educational failure.

EDS is worst during periods of physical inactivity, especially when concentration is required. It is no surprise, then, that the classroom is the most likely setting for the initial presentation of symptoms, uniquely positioning teachers to be the first to identify the EDS of narcolepsy.

Sadly, when narcolepsy is not considered by the school team, the visible effects of EDS are likely to be mistaken for one or more behavioral issues. A delay in diagnosis can lead to years of unnecessary academic frustration and eroding self-esteem.

The role of the school nurse:

School nurses are pivotal to a successful school program designed to identify students with uncontrollable sleepiness and ensure they are properly evaluated.

School nurses are needed to educate teachers, psychologists, special education personnel and other school administrators about narcolepsy and its effect on a student's ability to learn. Individualized accommodations can be made.

School nurses are also best equipped to educate parents about narcolepsy and provide the information they need to seek prompt medical evaluation for their children.

In the classroom, a student with narcolepsy may consistently:

- Fall asleep periodically for seconds, minutes or longer
- Stay awake but be visibly sleepy or drowsy
- Be slow to respond when called upon
- Attempt to counteract sleepiness with activity such as fidgeting
- Daydream
- Have difficulty concentrating, especially during lengthy tests and non-interactive lessons
- Have loss of muscle-tone (cataplexy) while laughing or experiencing strong emotion
- Have difficulty with attention span and memory

A student exhibiting the symptoms of narcolepsy should be evaluated by a neurologist or a certified sleep specialist. Narcolepsy is treated with medications and lifestyle management.

Classic symptoms of narcolepsy:

- Excessive Daytime Sleepiness
- Cataplexy (loss of muscle tone while experiencing strong emotion, like laughter)
- Fragmented nighttime sleep
- Hypnagogic hallucinations (vivid dreaming upon falling asleep and/or awakening)
- Sleep paralysis (the inability to move upon falling asleep and/or awakening)

Additional symptoms in young children:

- Irritability and tantrums
- Sudden unexplained weight gain

