

Restless Leg Syndrome and Fibromyalgia Connection

There seems to be a connection between RLS and Fibromyalgia as noted in The Journal of Clinical, October edition. In the article it is noted that people with fibromyalgia are eleven times susceptible to have RLS than people in the general public. Of all the disease, fibromyalgia by itself has the highest suicide rate of 70%.

RLS symptoms include: leg sensations that make it uncomfortable, unless you move your legs. Most symptoms with RLS are at night, but can be all day. Sitting seems to make the symptoms worse. Other symptoms include burning, tugging, creepy, crawly, achy, tingling sensations in the legs or arms that can last 1 hour or longer. People with RLS have an urge to walk or move their legs, which almost always relieves the symptoms. Pain from RLS can range from a mild discomfort to intense pain.

RLS causes sleep disturbances caused by rhythmic leg movements during sleep called Periodic Limb Movement Disorder (PLMD). Although RLS occurs mostly at night, it can be worsened during stress, anxiety and emotional upset.

Fibromyalgia, like RLS the cause is unknown. Fibromyalgia, is long-standing pain, day and night pain that is unrelenting. The pain is body wide with defined **tender points**. This is different than trigger points, which is usually a source of radiating pain. Fibromyalgia symptoms also include a deep ache, shooting pain, burning pain, which can be mild to severe. In addition, one who suffers with fibromyalgia, the pain is chronic and causes fatigue, Irritable bowel syndrome, memory or cognitive difficulties, sleep disturbances, headaches and multiple tender points. In the study above, Fibromyalgia, cases appear in 85% of women and the average age of women with fibromyalgia is 50. Of the people with fibromyalgia, 33% have RLS also. Sleep disturbances is usual for persons with fibromyalgia due to chronic pain, but the major part of the sleep disturbance in fibromyalgia is caused by RLS.

Conventional medicine treats RLS with medications in hopes to improve sleep and reduce the pain. The medication used is Clonazepam, which hopes to bring RLS under control. The side effects of the drugs include dizziness, blurred vision and muscle pain and in some severe skin reactions, some fatal. The other drug used is Mirapex, which has its own side effects including sleeplessness, nausea, vomiting, and in severe cases muscle loss, depression, rage, and tremors. Other medications used have similar side effects.

Keep in mind there is no cure for RLS, but reducing stress anxiety and relaxation of the muscles seem to be beneficial in relieving symptoms. Alternative treatments include stretching exercises, massage and chiropractic care. If one is deficient in iron then a supplement is suggested. Simple blood test can determine if you are deficient in iron. In addition magnesium deficiencies cause muscle disturbances and can be used in both RLS and fibromyalgia patients.

Calcium can also be used in both of these conditions. Abnormal levels of neurotransmitters release muscle contractions. These abnormal levels are seen in both RLS and fibromyalgia. Calcium is taken as a supplement that is combined with vitamin D. Valerian root is used for muscle pain and muscle spasms, but also as a sleep aide. Skullcap, a herb can also be used. Chinese Skullcap is used as a sleep aide, while American Skullcap is used for anxiety, both are totally different herbs.

The use of alternative treatments, especially chiropractic to treat both of these conditions has been proven to be quite effective. In decreasing the pain and stiffness associated with fibromyalgia. In recent studies 90% of patients suffering from RLS have found relief through symptoms with chiropractic treatments. The treatments can provide the correcting the instability in the feet, knees, ankles and hips. Adjustments made to the pelvic and lumbo-sacral spine stabilize these areas. Along with chiropractic treatments, stretching exercises are recommended along with nutritional advice. People with fibromyalgia have an 11 times more change of having RLS also, so treating the fibromyalgia would make sense to relieve symptoms of both conditions. Before undertaking and treatment regiment, consult with a physician to determine your best treatment plan.

Dr Ross is a chiropractor in Altamonte Springs, FL and treats both conditions in his office.