

# Acting Out Dreams

*Punching, kicking or yelling during sleep*



Good sleep is an important part of keeping your body and brain healthy. But during times of stress or as you get older, good sleep may be harder to come by. Many have insomnia, or difficulty falling or staying asleep. Some people act out their dreams while asleep. They may punch, kick, yell or even fall out of bed. In some, this sleep problem is linked to Parkinson's and other brain diseases. Here, learn more about acting out dreams.



## What Is REM Sleep Behavior Disorder (RBD)?

REM is the period of sleep during which we dream. Normally, the brain temporarily prevents muscles from moving while you sleep so you stay still. In RBD, this suppression of muscle activity is impaired. People with RBD move

and/or talk while sleeping. They may kick, punch, yell or get out of bed, all while dreaming and without realizing it. This can, of course, be frightening. And it also can impact their and their bed partner's safety.

RBD is diagnosed with an overnight sleep study, which monitors your brain and muscle activity while you sleep. If you act out dreams, see a sleep specialist, a doctor with expertise in diagnosing and treating sleep problems.

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## What Is the Treatment for RBD?

If you have RBD, medications may lessen acting out dreams and changes to your sleep habits and sleep area can keep you and your loved ones safe. Commonly recommended medications include the prescription medication clonazepam and the over-the-counter hormonal supplement melatonin.

Your doctor also may suggest strategies for safer sleeping. These may include sleeping on a low bed or mattress on the floor, in a sleeping bag, or separately from your partner, just until symptoms are controlled. You also may want to move potentially hazardous objects, such as lamps, away from your bed or outside your room.



## What Is the RBD and Parkinson's Connection?

People living with Parkinson's disease (PD) commonly experience sleep problems, including RBD. These can happen at any point, from many years before diagnosis through decades into life with the disease. In some people, RBD is one of the first symptoms of PD, occurring years before movement symptoms and diagnosis. While not everyone with RBD goes on to develop Parkinson's, people with RBD can make valuable contributions to research toward preventing the disease.



## What Research Is Looking at RBD and Parkinson's?

People who act out their dreams can help researchers learn not only about sleep and brain health but also about disease. Studying why some people with RBD get Parkinson's and others do not is a critical step on the path toward preventing Parkinson's. People with RBD can point researchers to the earliest signs of disease in the body and brain. And knowing these signs could lead to tests to diagnose PD earlier and more accurately and to treatments to stop disease from coming on at all.

The Parkinson's Progression Markers Initiative (PPMI) study, which aims to prevent Parkinson's, gathers information over time from people living with RBD, both with and without PD. PPMI is a landmark study sponsored by The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research. If you act out your dreams or have other sleep issues, **join the study that could change everything.**

