

# Sleepwalking: Causes, Symptoms, and Managing Solutions

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## DESCRIPTION

Sleepwalking, also known as somnambulism, is a sleep disorder characterized by episodes of walking or performing other complex behaviors while asleep. Among its enigmatic phenomena, sleepwalking stands out as a curious and intriguing behavior that has captured the imagination of both scientists and the general public alike. Often depicted in movies and literature, sleepwalking is a real and fascinating sleep disorder that occurs during non-REM sleep, leaving those affected in a state of semi-consciousness and engaging in various activities without recollection upon waking. This article delves into the world of sleepwalking, shedding light on its causes, symptoms, potential risks, and available solutions. Sleepwalking, also known as somnambulism, a category of sleep disorders characterized by abnormal behaviors or experiences during sleep. It occurs most commonly during the first few hours of sleep, when the individual is in the deeper stages of non-REM sleep. While sleepwalking episodes can vary widely in terms of their complexity, they generally involve activities that range from simple, like sitting up in bed or walking around the room, to more complex actions such as cooking, driving, or even leaving the house.

## Causes

The precise causes of sleepwalking are not fully understood, but several factors have been identified as potential contributors:

**Genetics:** A family history of sleepwalking seems to increase the likelihood of an individual experiencing it. Genetic factors might play a role in making some individuals more susceptible to sleepwalking episodes.

**Age:** Sleepwalking is most common in children and tends to decrease as individuals reach adulthood. It often peaks during late childhood and adolescence.

**Sleep deprivation:** Lack of sufficient sleep or disrupted sleep patterns can increase the risk of sleepwalking. Sleepwalking is more likely to occur when the body is unable to complete its natural sleep cycles.

**Medical conditions:** Certain medical conditions, such as fever, obstructive sleep apnea, and restless leg syndrome, can contribute to sleepwalking.

**Medications:** Some medications, particularly those that affect the central nervous system, may trigger sleepwalking episodes.

**Stress and anxiety:** Emotional distress or anxiety can sometimes lead to sleepwalking, especially in individuals who are prone to stress-related sleep disorders.

## Symptoms and potential risks

Identifying sleepwalking can sometimes be challenging, especially when the individual has no recollection of the event. Common symptoms include:

- Walking or performing other activities during sleep, often with a blank or glassy-eyed expression.
- Incoherent speech or mumbling.
- Difficulty in waking the sleepwalker.
- Confusion upon waking, with no memory of the episode.

While sleepwalking itself might seem harmless, it can pose various risks to both the sleepwalker and others. Sleepwalkers may inadvertently harm themselves by stumbling, falling, or engaging in potentially dangerous activities. There have been cases of sleepwalkers leaving their homes or engaging in risky behaviors while still asleep.

## Managing sleepwalking

Understanding the triggers and taking preventive measures can help manage sleepwalking episodes:

**Improve sleep hygiene:** Establishing a regular sleep schedule, creating a comfortable sleep environment, and practicing relaxation techniques can improve sleep quality and reduce the likelihood of sleepwalking.

**Address underlying conditions:** Treating conditions like sleep apnea or restless leg syndrome can minimize sleepwalking episodes.

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**Received:** 13-Jun-2023, Manuscript No. JSDT-23-26206; **Editor assigned:** 15-Jun-2023, PreQC No. JSDT-23-26206 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 29-Jun-2023, QC No. JSDT-23-26206; **Revised:** 06-Jul-2023, Manuscript No. JSDT-23-26206 (R); **Published:** 14-Jul-2023, DOI: 10.35248/2167-0277.23.12.457.

**Citation:** Shetty A (2023) Sleepwalking: Causes, Symptoms, and Managing Solutions. J Sleep Disord Ther. 12:457.

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**Stress management:** Developing effective stress management strategies can help reduce the likelihood of stress-related sleepwalking.

**Medication review:** If medications are suspected of triggering sleepwalking, consulting a healthcare provider to adjust or change the medication may be beneficial.

**Safety precautions:** To prevent accidents, sleepwalkers' living environments should be made safe by removing obstacles and potential hazards.

**Consult a specialist:** If sleepwalking becomes frequent, severe, or poses significant risks, consulting a sleep specialist or medical professional is crucial for proper diagnosis and treatment.

## CONCLUSION

Sleepwalking remains a captivating and mystifying phenomenon that continues to intrigue researchers and the general public. While its exact causes and mechanisms are still being explored, a clearer understanding of sleepwalking's triggers, symptoms, and potential risks is essential for both those affected and their loved ones. By adopting preventive measures and seeking appropriate medical guidance, sleepwalkers can reduce the occurrence of episodes and ensure a safer, more restful slumber. As the scientific community delves deeper into the complexities of sleep and its disorders, the enigmatic world of sleepwalking continues to unveil its secrets, shedding light on the mysteries that occur within the realm of our dreams.