

## Diagnosis

A positive diagnosis of REM Sleep Behavior Disorder begins with a careful medical history to determine whether the problems may be secondary to another health condition or the use of certain medications. A diary of sleep habits and possibly audio or video tapes of episodes will help your doctor or sleep specialist. Ultimately, an overnight sleep study will be key to conclusively identifying this sleep disorder, which can look similar to other parasomnias such as sleepwalking and sleep terrors. The sleep study or polysomnogram and a corresponding video will reveal that motor activity is occurring while you are asleep and dreaming.

## Treatment

Most people respond well to the medications used to treat RBD. Clonazepam (a benzodiazepan with anticonvulsant properties) is commonly prescribed. Additional medications are available, particularly for people with renal diseases or certain other health conditions, or who are taking contradictory medications.

Safety measures such as removing potentially dangerous objects from the bedroom and locking windows (to prevent attempts to 'escape') are often necessary to protect those with RBD and their bed partners.

## REM Sleep Behavior Disorder (RBD)

**REM Behavior Disorder (RBD):** A lack of atonia during REM sleep, accompanied by dramatic dreams. It results in violent behaviors as dreams are enacted. RBD is a parasomnia that occurs specifically during REM or dream sleep. The dreamer is very much asleep, despite the heightened or even violent level of activity.

## Features

Acting out violent, intense dreams is the major and often only feature of REM Sleep Behavior Disorder. The ability to move about while dreaming combined with the dramatic content of dreams makes RBD a potentially dangerous condition.

The range of behaviors associated with RBD are as broad as the spectrum of possible dreams. Like all dreams, RBD dreams can be fragmented and symbolic, so related behaviors do not always translate precisely. Bed partners may notice anything from a simple arm or leg twitch to complex behaviors that make sense.

Complex RBD behaviors tend to be harsh if not violent in nature. Although activity is usually confined to the bed and surrounding area, other common behaviors may include: leaping out of bed, kicking, running or chasing, attempting to 'escape', screaming or swearing, shouting or grunting, fighting or attacking bed partners, breaking nearby objects.

People with RBD remember their dreams, often in detail, but not their enactment of them. It is important to remember that people with RBD do not have a psychiatric problem. They are not aggressive or violent while awake.



## Do I Have RBD?

I have been told that I scream, kick, punch, flail, leap out of bed, or engage in violent behaviors while asleep.

My bed partner or others have noticed my activity during sleep, or expressed concern about it.

My actions during sleep correlates to dreams or nightmares that I clearly recall.

I have injured myself or those around me during my sleep activities.

I have destroyed property in my bedroom during my sleep activities.

## REM Sleep Behavior Disorder Mechanics

Episodes of REM Sleep Behavior Disorder occur only during REM or dream sleep, approximately every 1 1/2 to 2 hours.

Normally, the neurotransmitters that control voluntary movement are blocked during REM sleep-- a process called atonia. The resulting sleep- paralysis keeps most of us from acting out our dreams. In RBD, those neurotransmitters are not blocked, so neurotransmitters interpret dreams similarly to the conscious 'messages' of wakefulness, with action!



## SleepCaptions

### Risks for RBD

- ✓ Male gender
- ✓ Age 60 years or older
- ✓ Narcolepsy
- ✓ Periodic Limb Movement Disorder (PLMD)
- ✓ Sleep Apnea
- ✓ Alcohol withdrawal
- ✓ Multiple System Atrophy
- ✓ Brainstem tumors
- ✓ Stroke
- ✓ The use of medications
- ✓ Drug or alcohol abuse

### Effects of RBD

- ✓ Injury to oneself
- ✓ Injury to bed partner or others
- ✓ Destruction of nearby property
- ✓ Increasingly worse episodes

## Need more information?

Visit the SleepMedicine Education web site at: [sleepmedicineeducation.com](http://sleepmedicineeducation.com) for additional publications. See also:

**SleepIssues:** "Things That Go Bump"

**SleepGuides:** "Treating Sleep Disorders"

To schedule an appointment at any Sleep Medicine Centers location, visit [www.sleepmedicinecenters.com](http://www.sleepmedicinecenters.com) or call:

(716)92-DREAM

(877)53-SNORE



## Did You Know?

According to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, REM Sleep Behavior Disorder occurs at a higher rate in people with Parkinson's Disease (33%) and Multiple System Atrophy (90%).

A National Sleep Foundation telephone survey of more than 4,900 individuals between the ages of 15 and 100 revealed that 2% of those surveyed experience violent behaviors during sleep.

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine reports that people with RBD are at higher risk for: narcolepsy, periodic limb movement disorder, and sleep apnea.

Research through the University of Minnesota found that 90% of all individuals with RBD are male.