

Childhood Sleep Disorders



Parasomnias

Signs parents might notice

- **Sleep walking** – getting out of bed and behaviours that might seem odd or complex like opening doors and leaving the house.
- **Sleep Terrors** – screaming or looking scared in their sleep. Sweating, dilated pupils, quick breathing and heart rate and the child may also look flushed. They might not respond when being reassured or comforted. Common around 4-12 years old.
- **Confusional arousals** - moaning or calling out in their sleep or waking up confused in the middle of the night. Common around 2-5 years old.

- Glazed eyes.
- Confusion.
- Hard to waken.
- Children usually don't remember the events.



What is it caused by?

- Parts of the brain being asleep whilst other parts are awake during a phase of sleep when your brain is not dreaming.
- Happens earlier in the night and each episode can last up to thirty or forty minutes even though they are usually shorter.
- It can run in families.
- There can be triggers that induce them like stress, lack of sleep, certain medical conditions like sleep apnoea or certain medications.



How is it diagnosed?

- Presence of sleep walking, night terrors or confusional arousals.
- Episodes where the child is unable to move in their sleep.

How is it treated?

- Identify any triggers (e.g. not getting enough sleep, poor sleep hygiene, sleep apnoea) and avoid or treat them.
- Put in place safety measures to prevent the child harming themselves like locking doors on the outside, keeping furniture away from windows, securing windows, putting sharp objects away and using baby gates.
- Most children grow out of it and don't require any treatment.
- Gently guiding your child back to their bed without waking them up can be beneficial during an episode.
- Medication is only prescribed in very rare circumstances.

