What Are Sleep

Sleep Terrors, also commonly known as Night Terrors, are a type of parasomnia, or sleep disorder, scientifically classified as *Pavor Nocturnus*. This particular parasomnia falls under the category of Arousal Disorders- meaning that the unusual behavior only occurs upon awakening.

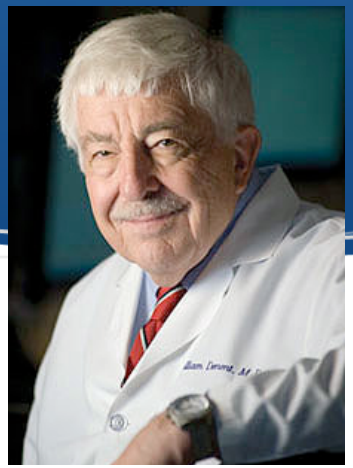
Sleep Terrors are episodes in which the person awakens from a nightmare to a state of panic, confusion, horror, and anxiety.

In a typical episode, the person will wake suddenly with a shout or scream and sit upright. Their symptoms include rapid breathing and heart rate, perspiration, flexed muscles, dilated pupils, frightening hallucinations such as seeing snakes or spiders, and a fearful facial expression. Occasionally, the person may jump out of bed and run about the room or house. It is often difficult to communicate with or comfort the person for several minutes, and the episode can last anywhere from 10-20 minutes.

Sleep Terrors occur during non-REM sleep, which is the slow wave sleep period occurring in the first third of the night.

To Learn More About Sleep Terrors or For More Information about Treatment, Check Out These Resources:

- The Stanford Sleep Clinic affiliated with The Stanford Center for Sleep Science
  - Location: The Stanford Medical Outpatient Center in Redwood City.
- Night Terrors Resource Center
  - www.nightterrors.org
- Try contacting Vaden Health Services if the Night Terrors persist and disrupt your daily



Sleep Terrors

More Than Just Your Average Nightmare

Sleep And Dreams Outreach Project 2010

Have you or someone you know ever

- **Sudden awakening in the middle of the night to a feeling of extreme terror?**
- **Difficult communication upon waking?**
- **Extreme confusion upon waking?**
- **Unsuccessful attempts at consoling or comforting the sleeper for quite some time after waking?**
- **Rapid breathing and heart rate, increased muscle tone, dilated pupils, and transfixed wide-open eyes upon waking?**

If you answered yes to two or more of these questions, you may be suffering from sleep terrors. Keep reading to find out more about this sleep disorder and to learn how to improve your sleep and quell such

Who can be

Children are most often the victims of sleep terrors, and the parasomnia has been found to be most frequent between the ages of three and five. However, researchers have found that babies as young as six months and many adults can experience sleep terrors as well.

Influential Factors and Causes

This parasomnia has a tendency to be genetic, therefore one has a higher propensity to suffer from night terrors if they are common in the family.

Sleep terrors have also been found to be related with alcohol use and anxiety. Some other causes include: sleep deprivation, head injury, noise, light, fevers in children, some medications, Obstructive Sleep Apnea, migraines, unfamiliar sleep setting, and PMS.

Adults suffering from sleep terror must should also be suspected of more serious illnesses such as bipolar disorder and anxiety disorders, which have been known to be related to sleep terrors.

What are the treatments available to

Most of those who suffer from sleep terrors need not worry about any great harm resulting from the disorder. The vast majority of children outgrow the disorder as they enter adolescence. However, children should be monitored closely so as to prevent possible injury resulting from jumping out of bed in a confused state.

One can seek a sleep specialist for an overnight study if the terrors are especially frequent or traumatic. The specialist may be able to diagnose a more serious sleep disorder such as Obstructive Sleep Apnea, which may be the cause of this parasomnia.

In particularly bad cases, a doctor may prescribe anti-depressants in order to suppress night terrors. Valium and Klonopin are two commonly prescribed medications for sleep terrors.