

World Narcolepsy Day: Creating Awareness, Improving Outcomes for Women

Narcolepsy at a Glance

Sleep is essential to overall health and well-being. Individuals spend an average of 26 years of their lives asleep, 7 years trying to fall asleep, and 33 years in bed, but this is not always the case with narcolepsy.

Narcolepsy is a chronic neurological disorder that affects the brain's ability to regulate sleep-wake cycles, resulting in excessive daytime sleepiness and, in many cases, cataplexy (sudden loss of muscle tone, which can be triggered by strong emotions). Up to 200,000 individuals in the United States have narcolepsy:

- **Narcolepsy Type 1 (NT1)** occurs with excessive daytime sleepiness and cataplexy
- **Narcolepsy Type 2 (NT2)** occurs without cataplexy

**1/3 of women
get less
than the
recommended
hours of sleep**

**One study found women
were diagnosed with
narcolepsy 28 years after
symptom onset —
12 years longer than men.**

The Impact on Women

Narcolepsy symptoms often begin during adolescence but can go unrecognized for years before a diagnosis.

Sleep disorders, like narcolepsy, differently affect women due to natural biological processes like menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause, as well as social roles, like caregiving.

Women and Narcolepsy

Addressing key gaps in clinical care, education, and policy for narcolepsy could improve outcomes and livelihoods of women living with narcolepsy.

Read insights from an SWHR interdisciplinary roundtable:
[Rising to a Better Tomorrow: Addressing the Impact of Narcolepsy on Women's Health](#)

Caregiving and Narcolepsy

Whether for an adult or child, caring for someone with narcolepsy can significantly impact your daily life, health, and finances.

Read Tammy's caregiver story:
[Acknowledging the Dual Realities of Parent and Caregiver: A Mother's Journey with Her Daughter's Narcolepsy](#)

Pregnancy and Narcolepsy

Women with narcolepsy who are planning for a family should have early conversations with a care provider about their health and considerations for pregnancy. Topics for discussion may include:

- Treatment modifications
- Potential complications
- Strategies for motherhood

Download SWHR's fact sheet:
[Narcolepsy and Maternal Health](#)

Narcolepsy Organizations:

- [Hypersomnia Foundation](#)
- [National Sleep Foundation](#)
- [Project Sleep](#)
- [Wake Up Narcolepsy](#)

Additional Resources:

- [Guide to Drowsy Driving](#)
- [Narcolepsy 360 Podcast](#)
- [Narcolepsy Safety Guide](#)
- [Pediatric Hypersomnolence Survey](#)

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