

TITLE 1: "Ask the Doctor"

TITLE 2:

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- Awareness

ABSTRACT OVERVIEW: A question from a reader in regards to smoking impact on RLS symptoms.

COPY OF ARTICLE:

Ask the Doctor

Q. *I have tried numerous treatments for RLS, all to no avail. I am wondering if my two-pack-a-day smoking habit has hindered the progress of my medication. Does nicotine aggravate RLS? Has it been shown to reduce the effectiveness of RLS medications?*



A. The effects of nicotine on RLS or the treatment of RLS have never been studied. Most researchers suspect that RLS symptoms are modulated by reduced dopamine function in the brain or spinal cord. Nicotine has never been shown to effect dopamine directly. RLS, however, is also affected by the degree of alertness and wakefulness: worse symptoms when less wakeful or alert, and less symptoms when more wakeful and alert. Since nicotine can either alert or relax people, it could be speculated that if it relaxes someone, that it could worsen their RLS symptoms. This, however, has never been clearly demonstrated.

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