

# "I'M TOSSING AND TURNING ALL NIGHT LONG"

ELIZABETH VISONE, 36, STAY-AT-HOME MOM IN VERONA, NJ



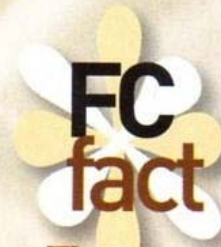
**her nightmare** "I had strange sensations in my legs for years when I would lie in bed or sit for a long time. If I didn't get up and move, I'd have pain in my lower legs. It took me hours to fall asleep," says this mother of two, ages 2 and 4. "I had many tests, but doctors either said it was 'all in my head' or put me on medications that didn't seem to help."

**expert advice** "This is a textbook case of restless legs syndrome (RLS), a neurological disorder that affects as many as 12 million Americans," says Arthur S. Walters, M.D., director of the Center for Sleep Disorders at the New Jersey Neuroscience Institute at JFK Medical Center in Edison, New

Jersey. "She has four common symptoms: an unexplainable urge to move the legs; creepy-crawling, burning or tingling sensations in the legs that feel worse when lying down or sitting; symptoms that act up late in the day or at night; and some relief with movement." (About 80% of RLS patients also have involuntary leg movements during sleep.)

**what finally worked** "People with RLS tend to be low in iron, so I prescribed iron supplements and vitamin C, which helps the body absorb iron more easily," says Dr. Walters. Elizabeth also began taking Requip, a prescription medicine first approved for the treatment of Parkinson's disease. Experts suspect that people with RLS are deficient in dopamine, a feel-good chemical in the brain. "Requip basically fools the brain into thinking the missing dopamine has been replaced, which helps reduce abnormal sensations in the legs," says Dr. Walters.

Elizabeth now exercises late in the afternoon to tire her leg muscles before bed. Plus, she's cut back on caffeine and alcohol, since both aggravated her RLS symptoms. "It took only a few days on the medication for me to see a major difference," she says. "I sleep better and longer at night, and I can finally sit and watch movies again."



The exact causes of restless legs syndrome (RLS) are unknown, but the disorder does tend to run in families. And in a quarter of all patients, the condition is severe enough to negatively impact their quality of life.

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