

**TITLE 1:** "Ask the Doctor"

**TITLE 2:**

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**AUTHOR/S:** Claudia Trenkwalder

**KEYWORDS:**

- Pharmaceutical treatment

**ABSTRACT OVERVIEW:** A question from a patient who was treated for sciatic nerve problems with a course of dexamethasone.

**COPY OF ARTICLE:**

**Ask the Doctor**

**Q.** *For the last 20 years, I have lived with RLS. In July of this year, I was treated for sciatic nerve problems with a course of dexamethasone, a corticosteroid. My reaction was very intense. Beginning the first night, my RLS symptoms were greatly intensified, and were more severe than*



*I've ever experienced. My symptoms returned to near normal when the dexamethasone was discontinued. Is this a normal reaction to corticosteroid treatment?*

**A.** Unfortunately, there is no appropriate literature on the effect of corticosteroids in restless legs syndrome, and not even a relevant case report. Some of our own patients who developed symptomatic RLS in multiple sclerosis have described a worsening of RLS symptoms during corticosteroid treatment, but others did not. We have also observed a worsening of RLS symptoms in one patient within a large RLS family, who suffered from rheumatoid arthritis for many years. She is now on low-dose methotrexate to avoid steroids. There is no good explanation for the symptoms of RLS worsening during corticosteroid

treatment, as both the absolute values and the circadian pattern of corticosteroid release are normal in untreated RLS patients. This was reported by Thomas Wetter *et al*, *J Neurology*, 2002. No other endocrine abnormality was detected in this study, either. Pathophysiologic speculations may concentrate on the changes of water and salt metabolism, alterations of the immune/cytokine system, or disturbances of the circadian rhythm induced by corticosteroid treatment. Without any studies on that subject, we may say that the worsening of RLS can be a normal reaction, but we do not know why.

*Claudia Trenkwalder, MD*

*Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry*