

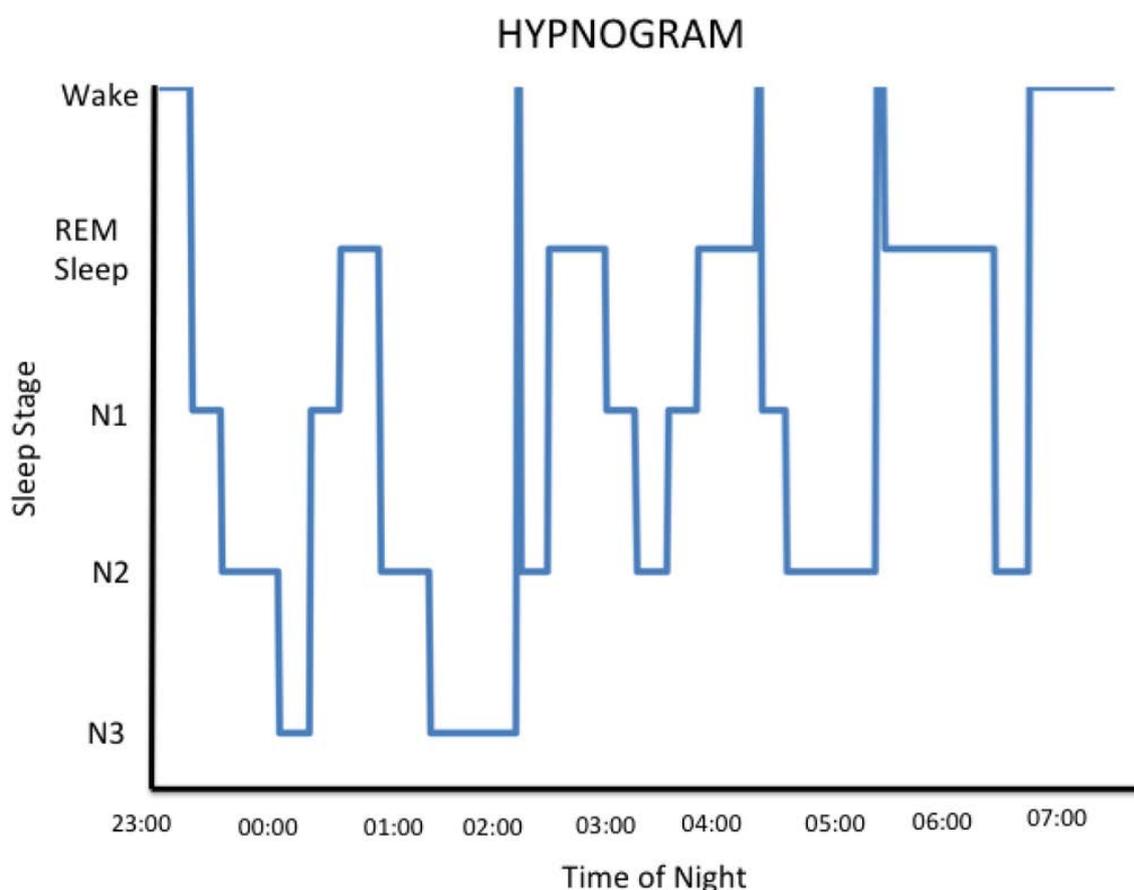
REM Behaviour Disorder – information for GP’s and community pharmacies

Sleep – the basics

Sleep is divided into different stages; rapid eye movement called REM, where we do most of our dreaming, and non-REM sleep. Non-REM sleep is divided into three stages (stages 1 and 2 are light sleep and stage 3 or slow wave sleep is deep sleep).

We go through the different stages of sleep in approximately 90 minute cycles throughout the night. There tends to be more deep sleep early after sleep onset and more REM sleep towards morning.

The graph below is called a hypnogram which describes in a simplified way the stages of sleep we transition through over the course of a night.



What is REM behaviour disorder?

Parasomnias are abnormal events that occur during sleep. REM behaviour disorder (RBD) occurs during REM (rapid eye movement) sleep. This is usually the phase of sleep during which we dream, and our muscles are temporarily paralysed so we cannot move.

People who have RBD are able to move their muscles while they dream, which means they can act out the content of their dreams. Unlike night terrors and sleep-walking the person can recall their dreams on waking.

This can lead to episodes of intense shouting or speaking, and violent movement or behaviour which can result in injury to oneself or one's bed partner.

What can cause REM behaviour disorder?

It is unclear what causes REM behaviour disorder, although the disorder may occur in association with various degenerative neurological conditions involving movement which would warrant further investigation.

How is REM behaviour disorder treated?

REM behaviour disorder is difficult to treat but it is advised to exclude any other sleep disorder such as insomnia or an underlying neurological disorder. It is important to minimise risk and also to avoid provoking factors such as anxiety. Sleep hygiene advice should always be offered as a basic approach to help improve a regular sleep routine. Pharmacological management may be required particularly if symptoms are severe or violent. The purpose of medication choices in treating REM behaviour disorder is to simply consolidate sleep aiming to reduce abnormal events which may occur during the night.

Other important information

REM behaviour disorder may be dangerous and associated with risk during the night. It is of significant importance that safety measures should always be advised and implemented. The main goal is to minimise potentially severe injuries. Such safety aspects may include ensuring windows and doors are correctly locked, sharp or breakable objects are stored out of reach or locked away and sometimes if the symptoms are severe it may be necessary to implement movement sensors or to sleep in separate rooms to avoid injury or harm.

Click [here](#) to access the SEL APC RBD pathway