



Wellness

Sign language

Seeing spots? Hearing a buzz?
Can't take a breath? We all experience situations like these on occasion. Should we panic?
by Deepti Nair

SHE WOKE up. Her eyes were open and she was aware of her surroundings, but she felt she couldn't move. She tried to break free, getting scared and panicky. Then, she 'broke free'. This isn't an excerpt from a novel. It's sleep paralysis and is familiar to many people. Just as lots of us often see spots, hear a ringing in our ears and tend to black out now and then. All of us experience these things on occasion. Are they signs of bad health?

FROZEN!
Dr R K Mani, director, department of pulmonology, critical care and sleep medicine, Artemis Health Institute, says sleep paralysis is nothing to worry about. "There are two stages in normal sleep - REM (rapid eye movement) and non-REM. The first is when people usually dream. There are quick eye movements and muscles are paralysed. When a person wakes up at this stage, the mind is awake, but the body continues to follow REM stage conditions. So people feel that they are paralysed," he says. Can it be prevented? Says Dr Mani, "No, but frequent occurrences of sleep paralysis combined with sleepiness in the day could be a symptom of narcolepsy."

IT'S ALL GONE BLACK
You stand up from a sitting position and it feels like the world is blacking out. According to Dr Vikram Singh, consultant, neurosurgery, at Moolchand Medcity, "This can be due to the inability of the autonomous nervous system to balance blood pressure when the body's posture changes. It could also happen if the body's fluid requirements are not met." The other reason could be a problem with the artery that carries blood to the brain. "If you black out, consult a doctor," advises Dr Singh.



PHOTO: JASJEET PLAHA; MODEL: SHRADHA NANGIA; MODEL COURTESY GLITZ MODEL MANAGEMENT

ALL THE WORLD'S A DOT
Do you see dots or filaments in front of your eyes? These are floaters - debris in the jelly-like substance (vitreous humour) inside the eye. They can also develop due to age-related degeneration. "Such floaters are not harmful," says Dr Anita Sethi, consultant ophthalmologist, Artemis Health Institute, Gurgaon. But she warns, "The sudden appearance of many dots along with flashes or pain can be a symptom of eye disease. If you see a shower of dots along with a drop in vision, floaters that are fixed at one spot or see lots of floaters and have red eyes, see a doctor." Short-sighted people are more prone to floaters; it could be a prelude to retinal detachment. Dr Sethi says, "It is advisable for people with floaters to get their eyes checked."

HUNGRY FOR AIR?
Ever felt like you have to yawn in order to have a satisfactory breath? Dr Nevin Kishor, senior consultant pulmonologist at Max Healthcare, says, "This feeling is anxiety-related and nothing to be worried about."

DID YOU HEAR A RING?
According to Dr Aru Handa, consultant, ENT, Moolchand Medcity, buzzing or ringing noises in the ear can be caused due to wax. He adds that in two out of 1,000 cases, these noises could be heard if a growth or tumour is pressing on a nerve in the ear. In most cases they are caused by the side effects of medicines and noise pollution.
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