

Special Needs information sheet: narcolepsy

1 Studying with narcolepsy

Narcolepsy is colloquially also called sleeping sickness. It is a defective regulation of the sleep-wake cycles, whose centres are located in the brain stem and in the midbrain. It is suspected that the triggers of narcolepsy include external factors and an autoimmune process. The main symptom is a pronounced daytime sleepiness combined with involuntary sleep episodes. If this need for sleep cannot be satisfied, the inclination to fall asleep increases and patients fall into a semi-somnolent state, during which they appear to be abstracted and perform their activities like automatons. After an involuntary sleep episode, narcoleptics are sometimes unaware of what they have just done and first have to find their bearings again. Besides a pronounced daytime sleepiness, sleep disorders of various kinds are an attendant symptom of narcolepsy. In addition, narcolepsy can occur with or without cataplexy. Cataplexy is a sudden and transient episode of slackening postural muscles (neck, facial, arm and leg muscles), usually triggered off by intensive affects.

Narcolepsy is a chronic disease and therefore affects patients for life. It cannot be healed. The symptoms of daytime sleepiness and cataplexies are treated with medication. Adhering to the individually required amount of sleep, regular sleeping times and a balanced diet are recommended as non-medical measures.

2 Possible effects of narcolepsy

- The excessive need for sleep during the day requires withdrawing options (such as a rest room).
- Students suffering from narcolepsy may appear abstracted and may therefore be perceived as uninterested or depressive.
- If a patient suffers from brief involuntary sleep episodes during the day, waking up may be accompanied by disorientation, which makes keeping up with lectures/seminars/exercises more difficult.
- In examination situations, rapid fatigability and an increased pressure to go to sleep may have a negative impact in terms of time.

Adaptations for examination situations are specified in writing after consultation.

Procedures are stipulated on the internet page of Special Needs:

www.unisg.ch/de/universitaet/hsgservices/beratung/beratungsstellen/special+needs/nachteilsausgleich

3 Contact

If you have any questions and concerns, please contact the Special Needs Advice Center:

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