

I urge you to have a Lyme Western Blot...

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Sudden sleepiness caused by narcolepsy

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Dear Dr. Gott: My sister is almost 81 years old. She will drop off to sleep in the middle of whatever she is doing. There are four of us sisters who get together and play board games. She will go to sleep in the middle of her turn while she is playing. She can be eating her dinner and go to sleep with her hand in mid-air.

She will not admit to being asleep some of the time, but in our game-playing we have waited a few minutes and her head will drop almost to the table. Is this normal?

Also, I have two places on my leg that get sore at times. About 20 years ago I had two ticks cling to the inside of my upper leg for about two weeks. We had been back east in the country. Even in showering I never noticed them. About two weeks after we returned home, I showered and my leg started itching. I scratched it and it felt like a lump, and blood was on my fingers. I saw two things on my leg, and my husband removed the two ticks.

I am 71 now and a diabetic. Over the years I've gained weight; my leg still flares up. My weight has taken my tick marks from the inside of my leg to the top of it now, so I can see them. They itch, and I scratch them raw.

Dear Reader: From your rather concise description of your sister's sleeping pattern, I conclude that she might be suffering from narcolepsy, a neurological disorder marked by inappropriate bouts of uncontrollable sleeping. In my view, she should be seen by a neurologist for an exam and testing, including an encephalogram and a sleep study. In addition, her difficulty breathing ought to be diagnosed using a breathing study.

Your leg discomfort is not secondary to a tick bite that occurred 20 years ago. In fact, I believe that the tick has nothing to do with your current health issues.

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Nonetheless, you continue to suffer from symptoms that could be caused by tick infection. I recommend that you work through your primary care physician to discover the reasons for your symptoms.

I urge you to have a Lyme Western Blot and other available tests to make sure that Lyme Disease is not your problem. To give you related information, I am sending you a copy of my Health Report "Sleep/Wake Disorders." Other readers who would like a copy should send a long, self-addressed, stamped envelope and \$2 to Newsletter, PO Box 167, Wickliffe, OH 44092. Be sure to mention the title.

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