Do you live with a sleepwalker?

If you or a family member sleepwalks, you may know the signs well. It often involves doing some of the following during sleep:

- Sitting up
- Walking around
- Talking
- Getting food or eating

When a person is sleepwalking, it can be confusing or even frightening for others in the house. They look like they're awake. They may say or do things that don't make sense. But the person won't remember saying or doing anything when they wake up.

Sleepwalking happens during deep sleep. This is often early in the night. It can happen to children and adults.

IS IT DANGEROUS?

Many people feel alarmed when a family member starts sleepwalking. Sleepwalking itself isn't usually dangerous. The best thing to do is to make sure the sleepwalker can't get hurt. Here's how to do it:

- Keep the home – and especially their room – picked up. Make sure things like electrical cords are out of the way. Have children pick up their toys, books or other objects.
- Keep exterior doors locked. If you can, use extra locks that are difficult to open, such as a chain lock or a dead bolt.

- Close and lock all windows at night.
- Never yell at or shake someone who is sleepwalking. Instead, guide them safely back to their bed.
- Consider putting a gate across stairways. Use gates that are designed for this purpose.

HOW TO AVOID IT

Some people may be more prone to sleepwalking. However, there are ways to lower the chances of it happening. They include:

- Don't drink alcohol.
- If you are taking anti-depressant medicine, talk to your doctor about it. Some of these medicines can cause sleep problems. There may be a different medicine that works for you.
- Go to bed at the same time every night.
- Make sleep a priority. Adults should get at least seven hours. Children often need much more than this. Ask a doctor how much sleep you or your child should get.

SEEING A DOCTOR

If sleepwalking happens a lot, talk to a doctor. There is no test for sleepwalking. But your doctor can check for other sleep problems or health conditions that may be causing sleep problems.

Source: American Academy of Family Physicians