

Nightmares and night terrors in adults

Many children have nightmares and night terrors. But sometimes they can affect adults.

[Nightmares and night terrors in children](#)

Nightmares in adults

Causes of nightmares include:

- stress
- trauma
- a mental health condition, such as [post-traumatic stress disorder \(PTSD\)](#)
- certain types of medicine, such as [antidepressants](#)

Nightmares do not usually cause any physical harm. But they can be disturbing or upsetting. They can also stop you from getting a good night's sleep.

Contact your GP if:

- you have regular nightmares that affect your sleep and day-to-day activities

Night terrors in adults

Night terrors are not the same as nightmares.

People around you may notice that you:

- scream or shout
- kick or move around in panic
- jump out of bed

Your eyes will be open, but you're not fully awake.

Night terrors:

- usually happen in the early part of the night
- can continue for up to 15 minutes
- can happen more than once during the night

It's rare to remember having a night terror.

Causes of night terrors in adults

Night terrors in adults are often linked to stress or trauma.

Sometimes a condition that affects sleep can trigger night terrors, for example:

- [obstructive sleep apnoea](#)
- restless legs syndrome
- [migraines](#)

Night terrors are more common if you have a family history of night terrors or [sleepwalking](#).

When to see your GP

Nightmares or night terrors are sometimes linked to trauma. Your GP may recommend psychological treatment, such as [counselling](#).

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