Patch Dreaming for a Non-Smoker

by MonkeyBoy

Dose: T+ 0:00 14 mg transdermal Nicotine patch

Body weight: 60 kg

Summary:
A deliberately sleep-deprived non-smoker puts on a strong nicotine patch to investigate the effect of nicotine on dreaming.

Conclusion:
Interesting dreams in which I ‘felt’ someone else was present, but the physical reactions to the nicotine were awful. I don’t recommend it.

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I’d been informed by a friend that when she started using nicotine patches she experienced strange dreams, apparently her brain wasn’t used to the nicotine while asleep.

I’d been a smoker once but hadn’t smoked for over 2 years.

I was taking no other medication of any sort, and was generally healthy of mind and body. I deliberately hadn’t slept for about the preceding 40 hours.

I applied one 14mg nicotine patch to my back. About 45 minutes later I began to experience the light headiness I associate with smoking and my leg began quivering, though I could control it if I chose.

By 75 minutes in, I had begun to feel quite nauseous, dizzy and uncomfortable. At about the 90 minute, my head was swimming and I was rolling around on the couch feeling very bad. The part of my brain that warms me ‘something’s wrong, something’s not right’ was screaming just that.

At about this point I felt certain I was going to vomit so I ran outside. I felt so bad after only an hour and a half that I ripped off the patch and threw it away. I didn’t vomit.

After 10 minutes outside the queasiness began to subside. I went back in and, head still swimming, lay down.

I don’t recall falling asleep. The next thing I recall is having a conversation with someone, it was a very interesting conversation about something concrete, but I no longer remember the topic. We were talking talk in two different languages, one was very fast and easy, the other ‘normal speech’ took considerably more effort and we used it rarely to say only one or two significant words. After some considerable conversation, I got carried away talking for a while excitedly in the fast, easy form. I realised I had begun to loose awareness of my partner because suddenly she said, in normal
speech, in a slightly amused, but friendly and warm tone, ‘go to sleep’. This made me realise that I was lying on the couch about to fall asleep. With a last desperate effort I said aloud to her ‘good night’. This I actually did say out loud in the real world and doing so woke me up completely.

I felt very strange after waking. This may sound like a normal dream but there’s two key things which were very different.

Firstly my conversation partner wasn’t present in the normal way people are present in dreams, which is more akin to ‘images [U+FFFD]r ‘ideas’. She ‘felt’ present in the very real way people feel right next to you when you are talking to them, so much so that I felt very strongly impelled to look for her under the cushions after I awoke. I suspect that the part of my brain which tracks the presence of other humans was active, while usually during sleeping it’s not.

Secondly, usually in dreams things somehow follow a logical flow based on me at the centre of them. My partner’s statement of ‘go to sleep’ was very unexpected and felt like something external someone had butted in and said, not something that had been generated internally by my mind. I’m not sure if I’ve explained this well. I wasn’t myself aware that one could feel something external was intruding into one’s dream state until this happened, but that’s how it felt.

All in all: the dreams were interesting but the nicotine patch was awful.