

Transcript Details

This is a transcript of an educational program. Details about the program and additional media formats for the program are accessible by visiting: <https://reachmd.com/programs/rub-some-dirt-in-it/where-did-the-willies-come-from-a-look-at-anomalies-and-their-nickname-origins/12287/>

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Where'd the Willies Come From? A Look at Anomalies & Their Nickname Origins

Marshall Miller:

I'm Marshall Miller and welcome to this episode of *Rub Some Dirt in It*, and apologies if it gives you the Willies.

I remember using that term in conversation once, maybe after seeing the ending of *The Sixth Sense*, and thought, "Who the heck made that term up, and why is it in my vocabulary? And more importantly, how do I get it out?"

Of course, the Willies is a totally made-up term with no medical significance, other than it has become synonymous with nervousness or the jitters. There are a few other medical conditions that have had their nickname more widely used than the actual condition name.

Here's a few:

Werewolf Syndrome. No, it's not the inability to remove your overambitious Halloween costume. The symptoms of Ambras syndrome include excessive hair growth all over the body, except on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. Also known as Hypertrichosis.

Alice in Wonderland Syndrome. An article in a 1955 *Canadian Medical Journal* names this condition for people with distorted vision or perception, making it look like some of their body parts are bigger or smaller than expected. This syndrome usually afflicts migraine and epilepsy sufferers but can also be caused by drug use. Stay away from the tea, Alice.

Walking Corpse Syndrome. I guess we are full circle to the Willies with this one. Neurologist Jules Cotard coined this disorder—Cotard's Syndrome—in the 1880s for people who believed they were missing body parts that weren't missing and that they were also dead or soulless. Depression and a belief in cultural folklore are typical markers for diagnosis.

I'd love to tell you about Stone Man's Disease, Sleeping Beauty Disorder, and more, but there's an episode of *The Walking Dead* on TV soon...and I have a date on the couch with a blanket over my face.

Thanks for joining us today, and remember! Whatever your condition is called, the remedy is always the same: Just rub some dirt in it.