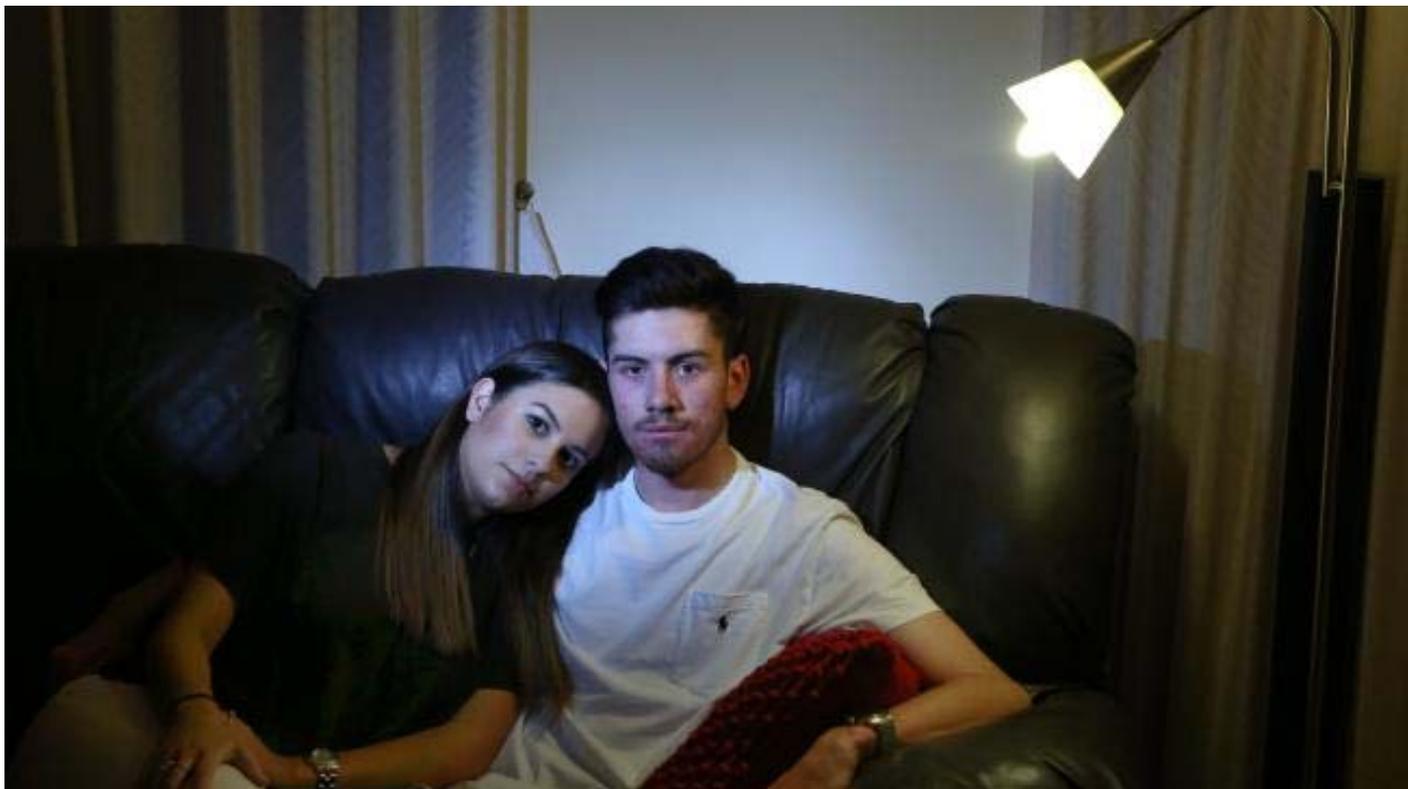


Outer East

Kleine-Levin syndrome making Brad Wadsworth's life a nightmare

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👤 Emma-Jayne Schenk Maroondah Leader



Brad Wadsworth with his girlfriend Kennedy Price. Picture: Stuart Milligan

BRAD Wadsworth struggles to describe his illness to friends.

When he's unwell, he's cooped up at home for weeks at a time without energy to move, let alone try to explain the experience to loved ones.

The Croydon North 20-year-old lives with Kleine-Levin syndrome, a one-in-a-million neurological disorder characterised by recurring periods of excessive sleep, altered behaviour, and a reduced understanding of the world.

During the episodes, which often last up to two weeks, Brad suffers an "out-of-body" experience, where he becomes zombie-like and unresponsive.

The rare condition affects only a handful of people in Australia, and there is no cure or treatment.

For Brad, the episodes started without warning when he was 17. He was watching a movie in a Year 12 class when he suddenly fell asleep at his desk.

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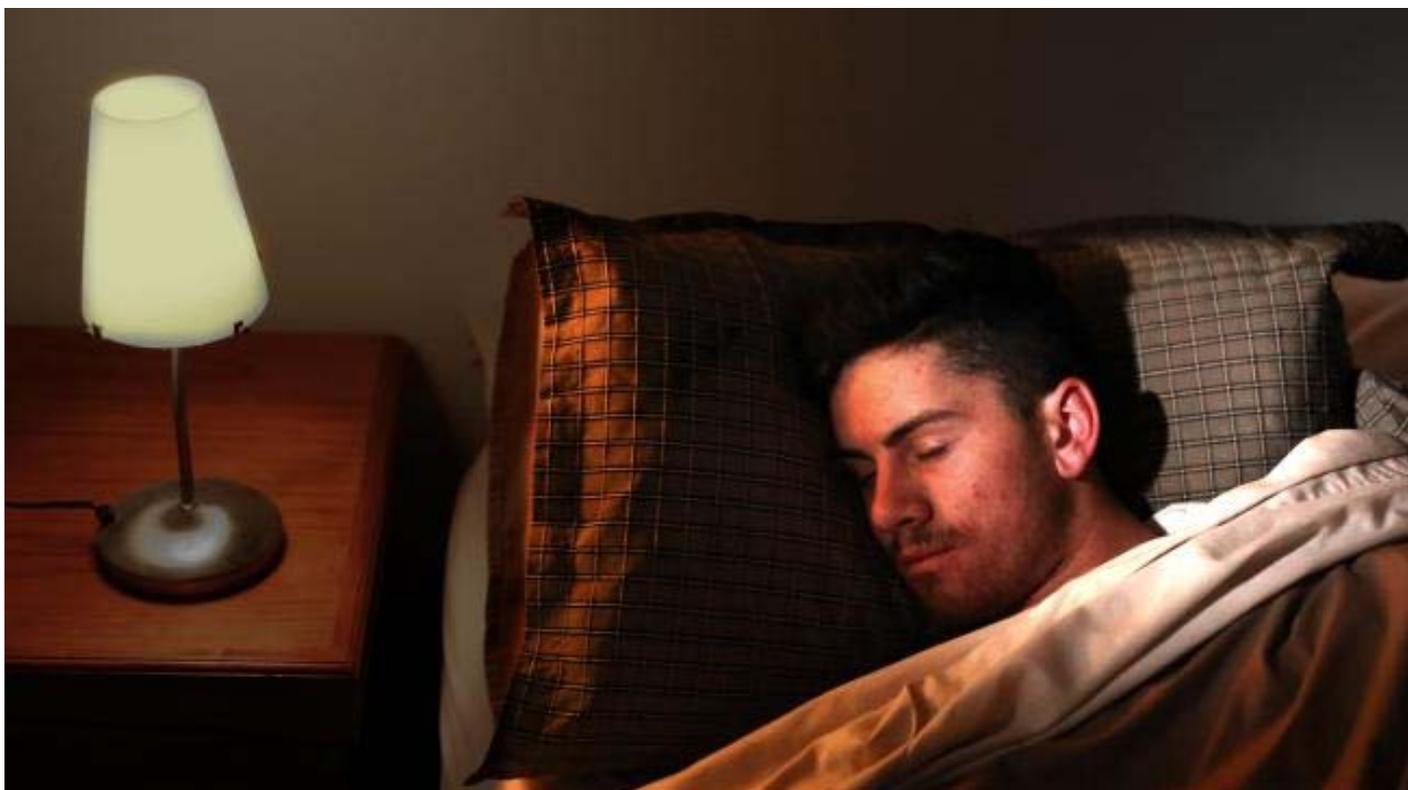
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When he got home, he fell asleep again while doing homework on the couch.

"I slept that entire day, then the next and then the one after that," Brad said.

"I slept for more than two weeks, and only woke for a few hours at a time.

"It was completely different to being tired, because it's not refreshing and it's like you can't even respond."



Brad Wadsworth sleeps for upwards of 10 days at a time during a KLS episode. Picture: Stuart Milligan

At first he was told it was stress-related — then questions arose whether it was depression or narcolepsy.

But mum Vanessa and girlfriend Kennedy Price knew it was something entirely different.

"It just flicks on so instantly," Kennedy said.

"We would see him normal one minute, then all of a sudden his eyes would be bloodshot and he would barely respond.

"All he does is sleep and doesn't talk or respond to texts or anything."

After countless investigations and tests ruling out other possibilities, doctors started treating Brad for KLS.

But despite using various medications Brad still has recurring episodes four to five times every year.

It affects every part of his life and he has had to defer uni, has missed cricket/football games and golf matches, and countless social and family events.

Generally the condition diminishes when people reach 30, and Brad's case is relatively mild compared to some people who sleep for upwards of eight months at one time.

watching your child not being able to function, you know that's not the real him," she said.

"Our whole family is affected ... but when he's back, you get such a sense of relief."

But Brad is determined to not let the condition define him, with him now working fulltime at a local sports club and recently completing a real estate course.

He said it was a matter of enjoying the good times and getting through the bad.

"I broke down at first when I didn't know what was happening," Brad said.

"But it's nice to be able to tell people what it is so they can try and understand and we just make the most of the days when I'm well."

DID YOU KNOW

- Kleine-Levin Syndrome is a rare syndrome affecting roughly 1000 people worldwide
- The disorder typically affects male adolescents but can occur in young children and adults
- When in an episode, people sleep for 20-22 hours a day, sometimes only waking to eat and go to the bathroom
- Episodes can last from a few days up to eight to 10 months
- Awareness of KLS is very low

Source: KLS Foundation

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