

Sleep Apnea Tips

A nighttime intruder creeps into the deepest corners of your sleep, and silently takes your breath.

This sounds like a terrifying nightmare. In reality, it's something that countless women, men, and children face, every night of their lives.

Sleep apnea is a medical problem characterized by the interruption of breathing during sleep. In Greek, the literal translation of 'apnea' is "without breath". It is a problem that, if left untreated, can lead to some very serious health issues.

The most common type of sleep apnea is obstructive sleep apnea, otherwise known as OSA. This problem is characterized by a blockage of the airway that allows us to breathe. There are a number of factors that may cause the blockage in obstructive sleep apnea. Deformation of the jaw, large uvula, excess weight, deformation of the nasal cavity and allergies are some of the more common reasons people experience this disorder.

Another type of apnea is called central sleep apnea. This condition occurs when the brain's breathing signaling goes awry, causing the afflicted person to stop breathing without any physical airway obstructions.

Although sleep apnea is a fairly common problem, cases are considered to present a risk when a person is found to have periods of apnea lasting 10 seconds or longer, and suffer frequent episodes throughout the night. When apneas occur, the afflicted person wakes from sleep, gasping for air. These attacks can cause irritation due to friction of the uvula and soft palate, causing those who suffer from sleep apnea to wake in the morning with a sore throat.

There are several related health concerns that can be caused by sleep apnea:

* **Snoring:** While sleep apnea is usually accompanied by snoring, it is by no means an essential sign or symptom. Many people who suffer with sleep apnea do not snore at all.

* **Daytime Fatigue:** This is one of the main symptoms of sleep apnea. Those who suffer from the condition are not able to fall in to a solid REM sleep. Because they wake up so many times during the night, they end up feeling exhausted all day long. Trouble concentrating, intense irritability, forgetfulness, and anxiety are also signs of apnea.

* **Headaches:** A morning headache is one of the common signals that sleep apnea may be a problem. Frequent waking during the night also causes headaches.

Other common side effects include weight gain, increased heart rate and depression.

If you think that you, or your partner, suffer from sleep apnea, there is a simple test that can confirm the condition. The polysomnography test is an overnight study, conducted while you sleep at the hospital. The test is completely painless and is covered by many insurance carriers.

If sleep apnea is confirmed, there are several treatment methods available. One common treatment is called a CPAP, or 'continuous positive airway pressure'. The treatment is performed via an air compressor that forces air into the airway on a continual basis, ensuring sound breathing. More serious cases of sleep apnea may require surgery to remove any of the obstructions blocking the airway and causing the OSA.

If you think that you may have sleep apnea, it is important to see you doctor and take the test. The long-term effects of sleep apnea include an irregular heartbeat, an increased chance of hypertension, and stroke. In addition, your chances of being hurt or killed in an automobile accident increases by a whopping 700 percent when sleep apnea causes daytime drowsiness.

Treatment options are easy and readily available. Don't sleep on it # get the treatment you need, as soon as possible!