

Information About Sleep Apnea

Sleep apnea is a serious sleep disorder characterized by chronic tiredness during the day, snoring, and periods of apnea (temporary cessation of breathing) which can last from seconds to minutes.

Sleep apnea is very common. According to the National Sleep Foundation, it affects more than 18 million Americans. Risk factors include being male, overweight, having a family history of sleep apnea, and being over the age of 40. However, sleep apnea can strike anyone at any age— even children.

Symptoms of Sleep Apnea

The primary symptom is excessive daytime sleepiness. Those with untreated sleep apnea also typically have low energy and problems with concentration. Other indications that someone may have sleep apnea include:

- Snoring
- Frequent awakening or awakening out of breath during the night
- Waking in the morning with a dry mouth or a headache
- Bed partner hears pauses in your breathing during the night
- Obesity is often a risk factor for sleep apnea

However, not everyone with sleep apnea has all of these symptoms. A screening test called Pulse Oximetry, which measures your blood-oxygen level while sleeping, is often done first. If sleep apnea is indicated, then an overnight sleep study will be done to determine the presence and severity of the condition.

The chronic lack of oxygen from the apnea periods is associated with brain damage and early aging. In fact, sleep apnea doubles a person's risk for Alzheimer's disease! Left untreated, sleep apnea can also have other serious and life-shortening consequences including:

- high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, and stroke
- headaches and seizure disorders
- memory and cognitive problems
- depression or worsening of ADD symptoms

Due to the potentially dire health consequences caused by untreated sleep apnea, it is imperative that you be evaluated if there is any chance you may have it. Treating sleep apnea often makes a positive difference in mood, energy, concentration, and overall health.

To learn more about Sleep Apnea and locate a practitioner in your area, visit:

- American Sleep Apnea Association – www.sleepapnea.com
- Sleep Foundation – www.sleepfoundation.org