

Your Guide to

# Snoring & Sleep Apnea



**What is sleep apnea?**

**What are the symptoms?**

**What are the dangers?**

**How is it diagnosed?**

**How does it affect *me*?**

**How is it treated?**



When you go to bed at night, you may be one of **millions of Americans who stops breathing throughout the night while sleeping.** When you wake up the next morning, you have no idea you were dangerously depriving your body of oxygen. This destructive condition is called **sleep apnea.**

Continue reading to find out more about sleep apnea and how to treat it- **it could save your life, or the life of someone you love.**

## Did You Know?

It is estimated that 20 million Americans suffer from sleep apnea and 17 million of those people go untreated.

**H**ow is it possible that you could stop breathing in your sleep and not even know it? It doesn't stop there. This cessation of breathing may happen 30 or more times, per hour. When it does happen, your oxygen levels can plummet and your heart rate can surge, causing stress on your heart as well as cardiac irregularities.

All of this will certainly result in you snoring and being tired the next day, but that is just the beginning. Hypertension, stroke, diabetes, heart failure, irregular heartbeats and heart attacks are all potential side effects of this deadly epidemic.

But you visit your doctor regularly, so he/she would know if you have a sleep related disorder, right? Wrong. Doctors usually cannot detect sleep



apnea in regular office visits. In fact, it is estimated that 85-90% of cases of sleep apnea have been left undiagnosed and thus untreated. How is this possible? Well, many people blame being tired on other factors and unless someone has witnessed your sleep apnea, it may never be discovered. Also, sleep is one of the newer fields of medicine, so not all doctors are able to properly diagnose your disorder.

Being a responsible, pro-active patient is the best way to combat this deadly epidemic. Ask your doctor about sleep apnea. Tell him or her you want to be tested if you are at-risk. This booklet will make you a more educated patient and help you ensure you are not suffering from one of the millions of undiagnosed cases of sleep apnea.



# So What is Sleep Apnea?

**W**hile there are different types of sleep apnea, they all result in the same problem: you stop breathing during your sleep. This is most commonly due to a blockage in your airway caused by the collapse of soft tissues in the rear of your throat. This type of sleep apnea is called Obstructive Sleep Apnea. It is also possible, although far less common, to have Central Sleep Apnea, which occurs when your brain fails to signal your muscles to breathe during sleep. If you suffer from both, it is called Mixed or Complex Sleep Apnea.

These episodes of not breathing can last for as little as 10 seconds or as long as a few minutes.

During this time, your oxygen saturation drops, your carbon dioxide levels go up and often times so does your heart rate. These episodes can cause or exacerbate other conditions such as hypertension, coronary artery disease and diabetes.

Once your body realizes it is suffocating, you will gasp for air and resume breathing until the next event. This recovery is called an arousal- it disrupts your sleep, but you don't fully wake up, so you are unaware that your body was just deprived of precious oxygen. This sequence of events can happen hundreds of times in a night, leaving you exhausted the next morning, but unsure as to why.

**Normal**



During normal sleep, the muscles that control the tongue and soft palate hold the airway open.

**Snoring**



When these muscles relax, the airway narrows. This can lead to snoring and breathing difficulties.

**Obstructive Sleep Apnea**



If the muscles relax too much, the airway can collapse and become blocked, obstructing breathing.



## What's the Big Deal?

**Y**ou snore and you're always tired- no big deal right? Wrong! You may suffer from sleep apnea and the problem only begins there. Sleep apnea is a condition that negatively impacts you physically as well as mentally and emotionally. These problems in turn affect the people you interact with: family members, colleagues, friends and loved ones.

Aside from just being tired, those who suffer from sleep apnea have an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, high blood pressure, arrhythmias, diabetes, and memory loss. According to the American Thoracic Society, people who suffer from sleep apnea have a 30% greater chance of heart attack or premature death.

So in addition to putting yourself at risk to the aforementioned ailments, you will also suffer from excessive daytime sleepiness, which can result in general fatigue, depression, weight gain, irritability, loss of sex drive, impotence, mood swings and an increased likelihood of accidents, namely car crashes, which of course can be fatal to you or someone else. Studies show that driving while sleep deprived is comparable to driving while intoxicated, but drowsy drivers cause more fatalities per accident than drunk drivers. Sufferers of sleep apnea are 3 to 7 times more likely to have a

car crash than those who do not have sleep apnea.

While sleep apnea is rarely deadly, its negative side effects can lead to the loss of your marriage, job, or your relationship with loved ones, not to mention your ability to enjoy life.

## Who is at Risk?

Sleep apnea can affect anyone, but there are certain people who are more likely to suffer from it than others. Below are some of the most significant risk factors:

- Being overweight
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Diabetes: 3 times more common
- Male (Twice as likely)
- Menopause
- Drinking alcohol / Taking Sedatives
- Neck size: Over 17" for men, over 16" for women
- Cardiac Arrhythmia (A-Fib)
- Stroke or TIA (a "warning" stroke)
- Pregnant (Increases snoring and instances of sleep apnea)
- Being over 35 (Risk increases with age)
- Glaucoma
- Smoking
- Narrowed airway / Retrognathia (recessed jaw)
- Chronic nasal congestion
- Ethnicity (African Americans, Latinos & Pacific Islanders more commonly have sleep apnea)

# Sleep Apnea Quiz

- Do you snore loudly?
- Do you wake up tired or un-refreshed despite sleeping all night?
- Do you or your bed partner notice you making gasping or choking noises during the night?
- Do you feel tired throughout the day?
- Do you have high blood pressure?
- Are you overweight?
- Do you feel irritable or depressed?
- Do you wake up with a headache, dry mouth or sore throat?
- Do you doze off while sitting, reading or watching TV?
- Is it difficult to concentrate?
- Has your memory worsened?
- Have you ever dozed off while driving?
- Has your performance at work declined?
- Has your sex drive tapered off?

If you find yourself frequently tired and you answered yes to one or many of the above questions, you may have sleep apnea. If left untreated, the situation will only get worse. The good news is that identifying and treating your sleep apnea is simple and can be instrumental in helping you:

- Reduce daytime sleepiness and fatigue
- Decrease memory loss
- Improve performance in the workplace
- Overcome depression
- Lose weight
- Mitigate symptoms of diabetes
- Reduce irritability
- Increase sex drive
- Eradicate snoring
- Reduce cardiac stress
- Decrease fatigue related auto accidents



# Do *You* Have Sleep Apnea?



An easier alternative is a **home sleep test**. This approach allows you to sleep in the comfort of your own bed while a small device monitors key inputs via a few sensors. In some cases

**D**espite all the complications related to sleep apnea, it is very easy to determine if you have it. All you need is a sleep study and fortunately health insurance usually covers the cost. You can ask your doctor about having a sleep study or contact your local sleep lab.

Having a sleep study is very easy. All you need to do is sleep! You will visit a sleep lab at night with private bedrooms that look much like one you might find in a house or a hotel. An experienced sleep technologist will greet you and explain the overnight sleep study to you. After which, he or she will gently attach the necessary wires to you in order to monitor your oxygen, breathing, heart rate, limb movements, eye movement and brain activity throughout the night. The whole procedure is painless and all you are asked to do is sleep.

the device can be mailed to you, so you never even need to visit a facility.

After your sleep study, the results will be compiled and interpreted by a sleep physician. Your doctor will share the results with you. If the results are negative, your physi-cian may want to discuss other causes of your fatigue. If you do have sleep apnea, the doctor will present a number of treatment options and help you determine which one will best meet your needs. The good news is that sleep apnea is 100% treatable.

If you are suffering from excessive daytime sleepiness or suspect you may have sleep apnea, please contact the Connecticut Sleep Lab or talk to your doctor. Consider having a sleep study- it could save your health, your job, your marriage, or even your life.

# Tired?

It's time to step out of the  
darkness of constant sleepiness.

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If you are always tired, you may be suffering from sleep apnea, a **significant medical condition**. The good news is you can do something about it, starting with reading this booklet. It will help you identify whether or not you may have sleep apnea. It will also let you know how to alleviate your sleep problems so you can get back to enjoying life. If after reading this booklet you have any questions, please call us as at the **Connecticut Sleep Lab**. We want to help you sleep well so you can live well.



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