

Monthly Wellness SpotLight by PSA

IN GOOD HEALTH

SNORING CAN BE SERIOUS! LEARN WHAT SLEEP APNEA IS & HOW TO TREAT IT.

Are you snoring every night? If so, you may think your quality of sleep is the only issue at hand, but you may be experiencing a serious health condition known as sleep apnea. Although there are numerous types, Obstructive Sleep Apnea is the most common.

When you experience Obstructive Sleep Apnea, your throat muscles relax during sleep causing the flap in your throat to fall and block your airway. When this occurs, you stop breathing and gasp for air causing you to wake up frequently. This can lead you to having a very restless night and if left untreated, it can cause extreme havoc on your body.

Obstructive sleep apnea has a major impact on your heart as well. It has been associated with high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, heart arrhythmias, heart failure, and even, sudden cardiac death.

Signs & Symptoms

The most common signs and symptoms of sleep apnea include:

- Loud snoring
- Episodes in which you stop breathing during sleep
- Gasping for air during sleep
- Awakening with a dry mouth
- Morning headache
- Difficulty staying asleep (insomnia)
- Excessive daytime sleepiness (hypersomnia)
- Difficulty paying attention while awake
- Irritability

Risk Factors

Factors that can increase your risk of developing sleep apnea include:

- Overweight/Obesity
- Increased Neck Circumference
- A Narrowed Airway
- Being Male
- Older Age
- Strong Family History
- Smoking

Complications if Left Untreated

These include:

- **Weight Gain** - The less oxygen intake you have during sleep can interfere with your ability to control your weight in several ways, such as causing low energy, chronic fatigue, and slowing your metabolism.
- **High Blood Pressure or Heart Problems** - The decrease in oxygen levels while you sleep can put wear and tear on your heart. This can increase your chances of high blood pressure, leading to other heart problems such as a heart attack, stroke, or abnormal heartbeats.
- **Type 2 Diabetes** - By having sleep apnea, it can increase your risk of getting type 2 diabetes.
- **Metabolic Syndrome** - This syndrome's side effects include high blood pressure, cholesterol problems, and an increased waist size.
- **Liver problems** - People with sleep apnea are more likely to have abnormal liver function. Their livers may also show signs of scarring.
- **Unhappy Relationships** - After all, they are sleep deprived too!

How is Sleep Apnea Diagnosed?

Your doctor will make an evaluation based on your sleep history. If they think sleep apnea is probable, they will refer you to a sleep disorder specialist who will schedule you to have a sleep study. A sleep study involves overnight monitoring of your breathing and other body functions while you sleep. An at-home sleep study may also be an option.

If the tests show your results to be abnormal, your doctor will likely prescribe therapy.

Treatment

If your case is mild, your doctor may recommend lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking. If your apnea is moderate to severe, Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) may be recommended. This is a machine that delivers air pressure through a mask to keep your airway open while you sleep. In some cases, surgery may be necessary.

In Conclusion... Loud snoring can indicate a potentially severe problem, but not everyone who has sleep apnea snores. If you have signs or symptoms of sleep apnea, talk to your doctor.