

Sleep Apnea

What is Sleep Apnea?

Loud snoring is often the center of comic routines in film and theatre, but in fact it is no laughing matter. This kind of snoring can indicate sleep apnea, a common disorder that can be very serious. In fact, a study published in the American Journal of Respiratory and Clinical Care Medicine (July 2002) links cardiovascular disease and obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), the most common type of sleep apnea. OSA has also been identified as an underlying factor in high blood pressure, as well.

With sleep apnea, your breathing while you're sleeping becomes very shallow or even stops sometimes 20 to 30 or more times per hour for 10 to 20 seconds or more each time. With OSA, you can't get enough air flow into your lungs through your mouth and nose, even though you try to breathe. When this happens, the amount of oxygen in your blood may drop. Normal breaths then start again with a loud snort or choking sound.

When your sleep is disturbed throughout the night, you can be very tired during the day. With sleep apnea, your sleep is not restful because:

• (and breathing pauses) occur many times

• levels in your blood

• several times during the night, resulting in poor sleep quality

Causes

When you are awake, and normally during sleep, your throat muscles keep your throat open and air flows into your lungs. In OSA, however, the throat briefly collapses, causing pauses in your breathing. With pauses in breathing, the oxygen level in your blood may drop.

This happens if the following conditions occur:

• than is normal



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