

## ABOUT US

### SLEEP APNEA AFFECTS FAMILIES.

Snoring and apnea can be extremely irritating and disrupt the sleep of the bed partner. These problems can aggravate, or become a focus for marital disharmony and family stress. It is made worse by the unexplained sleepiness and lack of interest in family life of the person with sleep apnea.

### SLEEP APNEA IS ASSOCIATED WITH HEART ATTACKS AND STROKE.

There is strong evidence that people with moderate to severe sleep apnea die prematurely. If you have sleep apnea you are more likely to have cardiovascular disease than someone without sleep apnea. Towards the end of each apnea cycle blood pressure may rise substantially and the heart beat becomes irregular. This may lead to daytime high blood pressure (hypertension). If you are overweight you may also be at risk of diabetes and have high cholesterol. Taken together these risk factors result in an increased chance of the person having a heart attack or a stroke.

### SLEEP APNEA CAUSES MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS.

Research has shown that people with sleep apnea are at least 4 times as likely to have an accident. Their performance on driving simulators is noticeably worse as the disrupted night-time sleep leads to a reduced ability to concentrate and increased chance of falling asleep at the wheel. When sleep apnea occurs in people who have occupations involving operating machinery or transport this can be a lethal combination.

*Sleep Disorders Australia (SDA)* is a voluntary Not-for-Profit organisation that provides information and offers support and assistance to people affected by sleep disorders throughout Australia. *SDA* advocates for the needs of people with sleep disorders and raises awareness of sleep disorders and the significance they can have on the lives of those affected by them. We also provide support and education with regards to the prevention and treatment of sleep disorders.

We would be delighted if you would join us. Membership is available to all sufferers, members of their family, medical professionals, and any member of the public who has an interest in the area of sleep disorders. You can join *SDA* via our website. For more information you can email our membership officer.

If you would like to support us with a donation. You can donate via our website or you can send a cheque to our address.



## CONTACT INFO



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# SLEEP APNEA



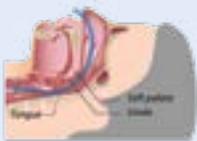
# SLEEP APNEA

Sleep apnea occurs when the airway in the throat collapses during sleep reducing airflow or completely blocking the airway. This disrupts their sleep and reduces oxygen supply to vital organs.

Severe sleep apnea affects about 5% of adults. Mild to moderate forms occur in 20% of adults. Fortunately effective treatment is available and once treated the person with sleep apnea can lead a normal healthy life.

## WHAT CAUSES SLEEP APNEA?

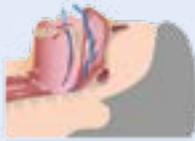
There are two types of apnea: obstructive apnea and central apnea. Obstructive apnea is much more common and is the result of obstruction of the airway leading from the nose or mouth to the lungs. The obstruction is usually the result of a narrowed airway which becomes partly or completely blocked when the muscles around the airway relax during sleep. Central apnea is rare and results when the signals from the brain to regulate breathing are disrupted in some way.



NORMAL BREATHING



PARTIAL OBSTRUCTION OF THE AIRWAY (SNORING)



COMPLETE OBSTRUCTION OF THE AIRWAY

If you are concerned about sleep apnea, you should consult your GP. Referral from your GP will be necessary before you can consult a sleep physician.

## THE SYMPTOMS OF SLEEP APNEA.

People with sleep apnea usually snore loudly and have restless sleep. Often these symptoms are noticed by their partner. The partner may also notice pauses in breathing. Each pause typically ends with a very deep gasp or snort as the person struggles to breathe. The person with sleep apnea may be very sleepy in the day and wake in the morning feeling unrefreshed. It can affect the person's ability to concentrate and function at work. Other symptoms which can occur in untreated sleep apnea are sore throats, chronic cough, depression, apathy, irritability, reduced libido, loss of memory and concentration and increased frequency of urination at night.

## HOW IS SLEEP APNEA DIAGNOSED?

The only way to diagnose sleep apnea is with an overnight sleep study. This can be done in the privacy of your own home. Or it can be done in a hospital while your sleep is monitored. You will need a referral from your GP or sleep physician for a sleep study.

**DISCLAIMER: Information provided in this fact sheet is general in content and should not be seen as a substitute for professional medical advice. Concerns over sleep or other medical conditions should be discussed with your family doctor.**



# SLEEP APNEA TREATMENT

1. The treatment of choice for severe sleep apnea is called nasal continuous positive airway pressure or CPAP. This consists of a pump that blows air through a mask worn over the nose. CPAP only needs to be used during sleep and if used the treatment reduces sleepiness and improves symptoms. The noise of the machine is generally much less obtrusive than the snoring that preceded it.
2. Oral appliances that fit completely in the mouth and hold the bottom jaw forward will reduce the severity of sleep apnea. They are very effective and are generally the first choice for patients with mild-moderate sleep apnea. They require an experienced dentist to custom make and fit them and monitor their effects.
3. Surgical treatments are sometimes recommended.
4. A number of other treatments including devices to avoid sleeping on your back and nasal valves may help some people but it is very important that any treatment you undertake is supervised by a sleep physician and that if necessary a repeat sleep study is conducted using treatment to check the effectiveness of your treatment choice.
5. Weight loss may help or even cure the apnea and may be the most important thing that you can do to reduce cardiovascular disease such as high blood pressure and diabetes.
6. Avoid alcohol as it relaxes muscles and may worsen apnea, as may sleeping tablets which depress the drive to breathe. Try to maintain a regular sleeping pattern. Caffeine and eating late at night should also be avoided.