

LACK OF SLEEP? SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF SLEEP APNEA.

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Do you have sleep apnea? Then you are not alone. About 25% of men and 10% of women have sleep apnea. Most of these individuals are not even aware they have it. The percentages rise drastically with anyone that is overweight or has airway/sinus problems. There are many kinds of sleep disorders including snoring, apnea, insomnia, restless leg syndrome or narcolepsy.

What causes these issues? The problem begins with the upper airway closing off. As a person falls asleep, their muscles relax allowing the airway to collapse. The result is less oxygen getting to your body and brain, and this requires your heart to work extra hard to catch up. Frequently, people wake up from snoring or breathing hard and never even realize it, making deep and restful sleep impossible.

How do I know if I might have these symptoms?

1. Do you ever feel excessively sleepy during the day?
2. Ever feel tired while driving during the day?
3. Have you ever been told you snore loudly or stop breathing while sleeping?
4. Do you ever wake up gasping or short of breath?
5. Do you ever wake up with headache or seem very irritable?

What are the risks if I put off seeking treatment? If left untreated, sleep apnea increases the risk of multiple health problems including high blood pressure, heart attack / irregular heart rhythms, stroke, and accidents from falling asleep while driving.

What should I do? Call your family health provider first. They will determine if a sleep study is appropriate for you.

What is the treatment? CPAP therapy is the most common treatment. A small machine delivers air flow to a mask. This air flow maintains an open airway while sleeping and prevents the apnea from ever occurring. There are many new machines and mask variations that allow for most people to achieve a comfortable solution.

How long will it take for me to feel better? Sometimes it takes a few nights to get used to wearing a new mask. Most people will feel great improvement within a few weeks, and many feel so much better they wish they had done it sooner. Don't wait any longer to see if this treatment can make a big change in your life.