

WHITE DOVE  
BOOKS

*What You  
Need to  
Know About  
Sleep Apnea*

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## What is Sleep Apnea?

Sleep apnea is a medical condition, which makes it difficult to sleep for some, as they are not breathing correctly, while for others, it can mean listening to snoring for quite a long time. Sleep apnea is most commonly also called 'obstructive' sleep apnea, which is the condition where you, as the person sleeping, stop breathing. As you stop breathing, you are not resting correctly, and this reduces the oxygen in the blood while you are sleeping.

The condition known as 'obstructive' sleep apnea is often caused by too much tissue in the airway, in your throat or in your nose. It may also be caused by tonsils that are enlarged, or a tongue-relaxing problem. Additionally, you could have a jaw problem

that is not allowing you to breathe properly while you are sleeping.

Sleep apnea affects thousands, possibly even millions, but there are methods of treatment to put a stop to those problems. If you have been in an accident and you have a problem with your nasal passage or your throat when sleeping, this could cause you to breathe differently and interrupt your sleeping habits, as you are unable to breathe when you sleep. If you have nasal problems, if you have an enlarged tonsil or gland, or you have excessive tissue in your air passages, you could be suffering from sleep apnea.

Talking with your doctor about your sleep problems is going to be the first step in treatment. Your doctor can arrange a sleep

test - known as polysomnography - to test your breathing, your heart rate, and to monitor your body while you are sleeping. This will give the physician a good idea about what is really going on, and then determine how to proceed with treatment.

Sleep apnea can be caused by deformities of the jaw. If the jaw is smaller in bone structure than it should be, it can actually cause breathing problems while you sleep. Other issues such as with the tongue can cause sleep apnea problems as well. If you find that you are not sleeping well, that others tell you that you snore all the time, and you are always tired, you should talk to your doctor about sleep apnea, and what you can do to solve your sleeping problems.



Obstructive sleep apnea can occur in children, men and women, those of all ages. Men are about eight times more likely to be suffering from sleep apnea. Those who are over the age of thirty five are more likely to be suffering with sleep apnea. Many people believe that people in their twenties, and women are less likely to report sleep problems, which could contribute to findings that men are more likely to have sleep apnea or obstructed airway problems.

## Why is Sleep Apnea a Concern?

There are many reasons why people need to find help for sleep apnea. It is a terrible problem that will only continue to get worse and eventually make your life even harder than it has to be. Many people think that having a sleeping disorder is no big deal, however it really is. There are many disadvantages to having a sleep apnea problem.

One big consequence of having sleep apnea is that the person will be suffering throughout the day. They are going to have an awful time getting through a day at school or work. The person is going to be tired and have great fatigue during the day when they need to be alert and awake. This could affect the job or school performance

and eventually lead to bad grades or termination.

Driving for people that deal with sleep apnea is going to be a problem as well. This is another reason why sleep apnea is a concern for many. The reflexes of drivers that do not get enough sleep are similar to those that are drunk. They are going to have a hard time concentrating and keeping the car under control. This is a very dangerous situation that should not happen.

A big concern with sleep apnea is that the person that suffers from it is going to have impaired daytime functions. It is going to be hard for them to keep their attention on certain things including work and school for instance. This is when sleep apnea begins

to affect their work and even relationships with their friends and family members.

Sleep apnea is also a danger to a person's health. It is necessary to get good night's sleep in order to be healthy. High blood pressure can be a definite problem for anyone that has sleep apnea. Having high blood pressure from the stress of having no sleep can also lead to more problems. These people are more likely to have a heart attack or possible stroke when they are not getting enough sleep for their body.

One thing that most people don't realize is that you do stop breathing, and this can lead to additional stress on your body. Sure you know you are tired, and that is a lot of stress in itself, but there are also times that the stress on your body is going to be

placed on your organs, your heart, your lungs and in the long term, your brain.

## Who is Affected?

Sleep apnea can affect just about anyone at any time in his or her life. This is not a problem that only happens to certain people. There are over 15 million people that are dealing with some form of sleep apnea and would like to have help with their problem. This is something that is affecting a lot of people and their daily lives.

There are some facts that have been proven about sleeping apnea and who is more likely to have it. Studies have shown that the numbers are higher in men. There are women who also have to deal with the problem - and it seems to go undiagnosed more in women than in men.

Sleep apnea has also been suspected to run in families. There are many families

that have more than one person dealing with some form of sleep apnea. This is a reason why researchers are thinking that this problem is genetic and can be found in different family members. This is one thing to think about if you are finding it hard to sleep. You may be having trouble because of this genetic problem that exists in your family.

Some researchers say that sleep apnea may be a result of being overweight. This is factor that is still being studied and there are many that are not sure if this is cause or not. There are more people that are overweight and have the sleep apnea problem and this is the reason why the studies are being done.

Some people think that people that smoke are also more likely to have sleep apnea. This is another reason why many people think that smoking is bad for the health. It is said that smoking affects the airways and this is the cause of the sleeping disorder for many. Quitting smoking is the best way to take care of the problem. Excessive use of alcohol and sleep medications is also another stimulant that is blamed for the sleep apnea problems.



## What are the Health Affects?

There are many problems that can be the result of having sleep apnea. There are many people that have to deal with the fact that they are going to have a hard time dealing with the day ahead of them. They may feel tired and restless because they did not get enough sleep the night before. However, there are other problems that can happen because of lack of sleep.

There are health problems that many people will face because they are having difficulty sleeping. When a person is suffering from sleep apnea, they are going to have pauses in their breathing. During these pauses in breathing, the oxygen level in the blood drops. The brain will react to

the drop in oxygen by waking up the person for long enough to resume breathing again.

The effects of sleep apnea range from annoying to life threatening. Some of the problems that can persist because of sleep apnea are depression, high blood pressure, irritability, learning and memory problems to sexual problems. Many people will find that they are losing relationships because of their inability to perform due to the lack of sleep that they are getting each night.

People with sleep apnea are more often likely to fall asleep at work or worse; they are falling asleep at the wheel of a car. There are more car crashes each year due to the fact that they driver does not get enough sleep at night. Many of these

people are also more likely to suffer from a heart attack or stroke. This is due to the result of high blood pressure from the lack of sleep that a person is getting.

Sleep apnea can bring about a heart attack, a stroke, impotence, high blood pressure, heart disease, and sleep apnea can cause an irregular heart beat. These serious conditions can be brought about or worsened as your obstructed sleep apnea worsens. Some may not experience these added complications, while other patients will have severe problems related to sleep apnea.

These are just a few of the reasons why sleep apnea can be dangerous to ones health. There are so many things that we rely on sleep for and it is important to get

the right amount each night. This is important not only to stay safe, but to also keep the health that we need to live a happy and healthy life.

Those who are suffering with sleep apnea, with obstructive sleep apnea are known to have an enlarged heart. The enlarged heart is not able to pump the oxygen needed through out the body, and to the brain. When suffering from sleep apnea, unable to breathe while sleeping, the stress the heart is under is tremendous and can lead to ongoing problems, and when left untreated, can eventually lead to death, a heart attack, or additional heart disease.

The enlarged heart problem can be dealt with. There are items, things, that can be used to allow the person to sleep without

problem. Sleeping while sitting up, or sleeping with a device that is going to open the airways is going to help. There are many dental devices, which will open the jaw, allowing the person to breathe without problem, and lessen the stress on the heart.

Obstructed sleep apnea is a problem that will also cause cardiovascular disease over time. As the person who is sleeping is unable to breathe, they are gasping for breathe, their lungs are not working to full capacity.

The continued fatigue during the daytime hours, will only add stress on the body, and can bring about sudden death. Sleep apnea can also cause a stroke, or high blood pressure. Not all sleep apnea is

going to require surgery to correct, but without some type of treatment the sleep apnea is going to cause stress on the heart, and other organs of the body so it is in your best interest to discuss the matter with your family doctor.

## The Effect on Relationships

There are so many people that have to deal with stress of everyday life. There are so many problems that a person can face and it is sometimes very hard on the body. For some people, they are finding it harder and harder to get a good night's rest at night. When a person is dealing with sleep apnea, they are going to have a harder time with relationships and keeping them.

Many that deal with sleep apnea are depressed and will suffer from terrible mood swings. They are going to experience these problems at work and at home. For a lot of them, they are going to find it hard to keep friends or make new ones. This is due to the fact that they are going to have mood swings and get irritated

more easily. This is because they are not getting the appropriate amount of sleep that their body requires.

Having sleep apnea is going to be hard on work relationships. Many times tempers will be shorter and people that are not getting the sleep that they need will become more irritable and will find themselves not getting along with their co-workers and business partners. This can make for a very stressful situation and one that will only get worse if the problem is not resolved.

Many times, not getting enough sleep will affect the way that a person will be able to deal with everyday problems that may happen with their family members and their children. Many parents and spouses will



have a hard time dealing with problems that can occur on a normal day. They may find that they lose their temper easily and get worked up over the small things that happen.

Another problem with sleep apnea and relationships is that a person that is taking on the stress of dealing with it will have a harder time performing sexuality. There are many people that will not have an interest in having sex with their partner. This is going to take a toll on any relationship over time. This is a good reason why a person should start to think about getting help with their sleep apnea so that they can have a happy and healthy relationship with their spouse or partner.

Many people that have to deal with lack of sleep due to sleep apnea are going to find it harder to make a relationship work. This is a big problem for many people and will only add to the stress of it all. Getting help with it and finding ways to make the sleep apnea better is the only way that a person can get on with their lives and be happy and healthy in their relationships with anyone personal or business related.

## During Pregnancy

Studies are showing that sleep apnea is very common in pregnant women. During pregnancy, the lack of oxygen can become a very big problem for both the mother and the unborn baby. Many studies are researching this myth and finding the connection between sleep apnea and small birth weight. Being pregnant is stressful enough for some, and they do not need any added problems to deal with.

These studies are determining that women that are pregnant and have to deal with sleep apnea could have some complications with their pregnancy. These complications can include low birth weight and many other problems. For some women that have breathing problems

normally, they may have to watch for severe asthma attacks.

It is important for a pregnant woman that is dealing with sleep apnea to get treatment as early as she can. Having this problem may end up restricting the fetus to grow, which will result in problems with the baby and could also lead to death. The sooner the problem gets fixed, the better off the woman and the baby will be. It is important to have a healthy pregnancy in order to have a healthier baby.

Sleep is something that everyone needs and that is especially true for pregnant woman who need their rest to take care of two people instead of just one.

## Sleep Apnea and Children

As the parent of a child with sleep apnea, you will find they snore; they make all types of strange noises when they are sleeping, and you will find their small chest is going to retract as they try to catch a breathe when sleeping. A child with sleep apnea is not going to be getting a good night sleep when they are not able to breathe properly while sleeping.

Sleeping, with snoring, and with the inability to breathe properly can lead to harsh behavior, the inability to concentrate and the child is going to be tired more often.

The same symptoms that adults feel and notice will be noticed in children when it comes to sleep apnea, and obstructive sleep apnea. The signs that a child is tired

during the day, that you hear the noises when they are sleeping, that you see they have a hard time breathing when they are sleeping, and that they are cranky or irritable even after a long nights rest, these are all signs of sleep apnea.

The signs of a child that is suffering with sleep apnea are similar to those of the adult. For the child, a loud a raspy noise when they are sleeping occurs. They gasp or choke for air when sleeping. They have a very restless night sleep, go through bedwetting problems, they often tell you about nightmares, and terrors in the dark. Children will sleep with their mouth open, you can see their chest retract as they gasp for air, and they sometimes are sleeping in strange positions. The strange positions come about because they are so tired, so

exhausted, they fall asleep in various positions that will allow the child to breathe freely and properly to get rest.

A child may show signs of depression or outward signs of confusion because they are generally tired, from lack of sleep. The child may also show signs of behavior changes as they are not getting the sleep needed that is related to sleep apnea. A sleep test can be done on the child, as with adults, to determine the severity of the sleep apnea, and the additional stress on the body, or lack of oxygen, which will then give the doctor the means to make a more concrete method of helping your child, with or without surgery.

What you might find surprising is that just 25 years ago, the only method of helping a

child that had very severe obstructive sleep apnea was a tracheotomy. In our modern times, doctors realize that removal of the tonsils, and / or the adenoids is going to make a major difference in how a child breathes. The removal of tissue in the airway is also a boosting effort that will not harm the child, but that will allow the child to breathe much better overall, giving the child a much better restful night of sleep.



## How Do You Know?

For some people they may not realize that they have a sleeping disorder.

They may just think that they are restless and have a hard time falling asleep at night. However, for some this may not be the reason at all. Some of these people that are not sleeping at night, may have sleep apnea.

People that are bothered by sleep apnea complain that they are waking up with a sore or dry throat. They may sometimes wake up choking or gasping for air. Often times the people that are affected by sleep apnea are waking up to the sound of their own snoring. This is something that will confirm sleep apnea and it may be time to get some treatment for it.

A person with sleep apnea often complains that they are tired during the day. They are not getting enough sleep at night and this is making it hard for them to deal with a normal work or school day. For some, it may start to affect their job performance or get them in trouble at school with failing grades.

There are other symptoms that are very common in most people that are suffering from sleep apnea. Some of these problems may be headaches, forgetfulness, terrible mood swings and even lack of sex drive. This is going to give a person the clue that they are not getting enough sleep at night and it may be time to get some kind of treatment for their disorder.

Many people that have sleep apnea are reporting that they are not getting enough sleep at night and that they are waking up throughout their sleep time. This is when they sometimes reach for the sleep medications to help them fall asleep and stay sleeping. This is sometimes the wrong approach to this disorder. These medications can in some cases, make the problem worse and there are many that will suffer more from the side effects of the medications.

The sleeping medications that a lot of people turn to when they cannot get the sleep that they need, can make a person have more side effects that will continue to disturb their day. They may feel drowsier from the medications or they can feel nervous and jumpy. These alternatives are

not always the best choice for a person that has a sleeping disorder like sleep apnea. It is always best to seek the help of a professional when it comes to getting help for getting a good night's rest.

A sleep test, performed by a specialist that your family doctor recommends is going to be able to determine if you are suffering from sleep apnea or if you are suffering from additional problems. Sleep apnea can cause additional problems, such as a heart attack, or a stroke in older generations. The sleep test that you may have to undergo is known as the polysomnograph, and this is going to allow you to sleep while the doctor is monitoring your sleep patterns and your body functions.

## Available Treatments

The good news is that sleep apnea can be treated in various ways, with and without surgery. For those who are suffering with sleep apnea, you most likely are going to be told to lose weight, to sleep on your side, and to sleep at an elevation. These methods are well known for treating those with sleep apnea, naturally without having to go through surgery first.

Sleeping on your side can move the obstruction you may have, or it may open additional airway so you can breathe while you are sleeping. If you are overweight, this can cause a restriction on your airways while you are lying down, and losing weight is going to lessen the stress on your body.

Additionally, there are devices, which are going to hold the tongue in place while you sleep. If sleep apnea is occurring because the tongue falls back into the throat, this can be easily treated with a device that is going to hold the tongue in place while you sleep. While it could feel a little strange with the first use, you will find that you will be able to sleep easily and you will feel more rested as the problems associated with sleep apnea are lessened with the continued use of the device.

Another type of treatment that does not require surgery for those who are suffering sleep apnea is the continuous positive airway pressure device. This is going to be a tube or a mask that is worn at night that is putting air into the nasal passage while you are sleeping. This is going to increase

the oxygen levels in your blood, and you will not snore, or gasp for breath. The device treats the problem so you can get rest, get sleep and feel rested for your next day.

If all else fails, surgery could be the appropriate option. Removing the tonsils or removing the adenoids could be a first alternative. If a person has too much tissue in the nasal passage or in the throat, this could be removed using a laser process. The surgery is minor and will require a short time for recovery, but the results are well worth the time invested in having the surgery completed and for recovery.

Above all else, remember that sleep apnea is curable – so if you are a sufferer, seek

your physician's advice and get the treatment that is right for you.



## About White Dove Books

Will Edwards is the founder of [White Dove Books](#) - the internet's leading website for Self-Improvement and Personal Development. A graduate of the University of Birmingham, he develops and teaches Personal Development workshops and is a published author.

Within its first three years, White Dove Books was recognised as one of the internet's leading sites for self-help and personal development; breaking into the top 100,000 sites on the internet at the end of 2005.

The INSPIRATION newsletter was started in 2005 as a way of providing helpful information including tips, articles and free inspirational eBooks to our visitors.

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