

OBSTRUCTIVE SLEEP APNEA

Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) is a life altering and life threatening breathing disorder, caused by upper airway obstruction during sleep. However, it is easily identified and effectively treated. The obstruction could be partial (hypopnea) or complete (apnea). The upper airway obstruction happens over and over again throughout the night, which interferes with normal sleep pattern and results in sleep fragmentation. Sleep fragmentation results in chronic daytime sleepiness.

4% of men and 2% of women aged 30-60 meet the minimum criteria for OSA. The majority of people are undiagnosed and untreated. If left untreated, OSA may lead to Hypertension, Cardiac arrhythmias, Stroke, decreased quality of life, Motor vehicle and work-related accidents,

The two main symptoms are excessive daytime sleepiness and snoring with pauses in breathing.

Other frequent symptoms include:

- Gasping or choking during sleep
- Restless sleep
- Poor judgment/concentration
- Irritability
- Obesity
- Hypertension
- Depression
- Oropharyngeal crowding
- Morning headaches
- Sexual dysfunction
- Nocturia
- Neck circumference >17 inches in men and .16 inches in women

Obesity, large neck, family history of sleep apnea, male, recessed chin or large tonsils and adenoids – all these have a greater risk of having sleep apnea.

An overnight sleep study will provide information about a patient's breathing and sleep. The sleep study helps in determining the type of sleep apnea, severity of the apnea and the treatment options.

Positive Airway Pressure (PAP) therapy is the treatment of choice for Obstructive Sleep Apnea. The goal is to prevent upper airway collapse during sleep. CPAP machine delivers a gentle positive pressure air through the mask. The positive pressure air creates a pneumatic splint and opens the upper airway.

When CPAP machine is used for an average of 4 hrs every night, it will eliminate snoring, abnormal breathing, daytime sleepiness and improves quality of life.

CPAP is a treatment, not a cure. You will feel better only as long as you use it.