

Do you have High Blood Pressure? Cardiac Disease? Diabetes? Is your Sleep the cause of it?



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Most people do not realize how important the proper sleeping patterns are for people's overall health. Any disruptions throughout the night can affect a healthy night's sleep, which in turn, can have a direct affect on many conditions including high blood pressure (hypertension), cardiac disease and diabetes. The latest research is specifically connecting snoring and sleep apnea to these serious life-threatening illnesses and yet most people are not being properly tested or treated to address this common problem. Sleep medicine and sleep dentistry are two of the fastest growing areas in the health arena. With newer technology, precise and comfortable sleep appliances, and a better understanding of the connections between sleep breathing disorders and overall health problems, we are improving and saving the lives of many people suffering with these issues.

People exposed to prolonged periods of shortened sleep have significant increases



Dentally Speaking
by
Jeffrey S.
Haddad D.D.S.

in blood pressure during nighttime hours. This can be the result of many different factors including clenching and grinding your teeth at night, snoring, or an even more serious condition called sleep apnea. Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) can actually cause you to stop breathing dozens of times a night for at least 10 seconds at a time. It occurs when there is an obstruction blocking your airway. These blockages are caused by the soft tissue at the back of the throat, your tongue, your tonsils or your adenoids. This blockage stops your breathing, which then deprives your body of oxygen. These constant disruptions during sleep never allow a person to reach the level of REM sleep that is necessary for the body to properly heal.

Your brain and heart don't receive enough oxygen as a result of OSA. This can lead to increased blood pressure and heart rate, and can put you at greater risk of heart attack and stroke. "We know high blood pressure, particularly during the night, is one of the major risk factors for heart disease, and Americans typically do not get enough sleep," says lead author Naima Covassin, Ph.D., Mayo Clinic cardiovascular diseases research fellow.

Another very serious condition that affects over 25 million people in the United States is diabetes. Unfortunately, most people are unaware of the connection between poor sleep patterns and this illness. "About half of type 2 diabetics have sleep-disordered breathing," says Osama Hamdy, M.D., director of inpatient diabetes management at Joslin Diabetes Center in Boston. So if you're diagnosed with the condition – characterized by loud snoring and daytime sleepiness – it's a good bet to get your blood sugar levels checked, too. One recent Canadian study showed that 23% of patients diagnosed with mild or moderate obstructive sleep apnea, a common sleep disorder, went on to develop diabetes within 5½ years. The connection isn't completely understood, but there's one important link between the two: Patients with sleep-disordered breathing tend to release stress hormones during sleep, which can raise blood sugar levels.

Solutions for Sleep Disorders

The most common treatment for those suffering from OSA is something called the Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) system. This device has successfully treated many people, and is considered the standard of care in sleep medicine. Unfortunately, some studies estimate compliance to be as low as 29% since it can be rather bulky and difficult to sleep with. **If you are NOT compliant with your CPAP, then your sleep apnea is NOT being treated properly.**

Your dentist may have an alternative for non-compliant CPAP users, which includes a custom sleep appliance that opens the airway and reduces snoring. This innovative appliance is considerably more comfortable (with a 90% compliance rate) and much easier to travel with than a bulky CPAP machine.

Not all Sleep Appliances are the Same

I do caution against self-treatment because over-the-counter or online sleep apnea appliances can hurt, not heal. In addition, your dentist needs to be properly trained to provide you with a safe and effective device. An incorrect appliance can cause patients to experience severe headaches and jaw pain or even make your sleep apnea worse. With precisely measured sleep appliances based on personal muscle physiology, people are comfortable and their sleep issues improve with greater predictability. Patients love the comfort of the sleep appliances we provide them, and most importantly, love how well rested and energized they feel from wearing it. Because OSA is a potentially dangerous condition and has effects on many serious conditions, if you believe you may suffer from it, please consult with your physician or dentist.

Jeffrey S. Haddad D.D.S. of Doolin & Haddad Advanced Dentistry completed his dental education at the University of Michigan in 2001. Dr. Haddad is a fellow of the prestigious Las Vegas Institute for Advanced Dental Studies. He lectures nationally on cosmetic dentistry, TMJ disorders and practice management.

For more information, visit www.rochesteradvanceddentistry.com.

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