



## **Obstructive Sleep Apnea**

Rex Pulmonary Rehab

## What is it?



Sleep apnea means that breathing stops for short periods during sleep. It can be mild or severe depending on the number of times an hour that you stop breathing or have slowed breathing. This often leads to the following.

- Decreased blood oxygen level and increased carbon dioxide levels.
- Long term problems such as high blood pressure and heart disease

# What are the symptoms?

There are symptoms of sleep apnea that you may notice and symptoms that others may notice when you're asleep.

Symptoms you may notice include:

- Feeling extremely sleepy during the day.
- Feeling unrefreshed or tired after a night's sleep.
- Problems with memory and concentration, or mood changes.
- Morning or night headaches.
- Heartburn or a sour taste in your mouth at night.
- Swelling of the legs.
- Getting up often during the night to urinate.
- A dry mouth or sore throat in the morning.



Your bed partner may notice that you:

- Have episodes of not breathing.
- Snore loudly. Almost all people who have sleep apnea snore. But not all people who snore have sleep apnea.
- Toss and turn during sleep.
- Have nighttime choking or gasping spells.

# How is it diagnosed?

Your doctor will probably do a physical exam and ask about your past health. He or she may also ask you or your bed partner about your snoring and sleep behavior and how tired you feel during the day.

Your doctor may suggest a sleep study. They will check for how often you stop breathing or have too little air flowing into your lungs during sleep. They also find out how much oxygen you have in your blood during sleep.

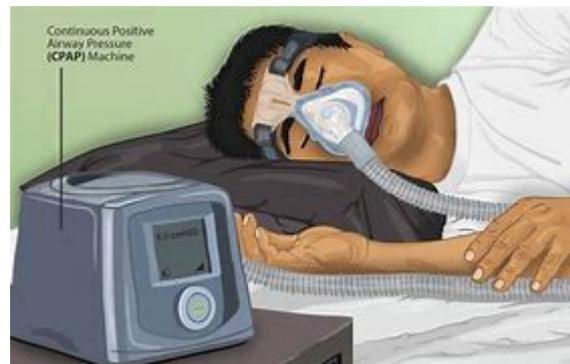


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## How is it treated?

Sleep apnea is often treated with devices that deliver air through a mask to help keep your airways open. These include:

- Continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP). This increases air pressure in your throat. It keeps your airway open when you breathe in. It's the most common device.
  - Bilevel positive airway pressure (BiPAP). This uses different air pressures when you breathe in and out.
  - Adaptive servo ventilation (ASV). It senses pauses in breathing and adjusts air pressure. It's mostly used for central sleep apnea.
- If your tonsils or other tissues are blocking your airway, your doctor may suggest surgery to open the airway.

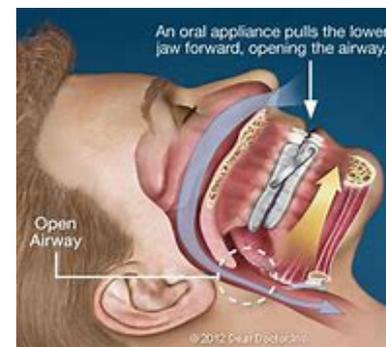


# How can you care for yourself?

You may be able to treat mild sleep apnea by making changes in how you live and the way you sleep. For example, it may help to:

- Lose weight if you are overweight.
- Sleep on your side, not your back.
- Avoid alcohol and medicines such as sedatives before bed.

You may also try an oral breathing device. It helps keep your airways open while you sleep.



## Where can you learn more?

Go to MyUNC at <https://myuncchart.org>

Select Patient Education under the Resources menu. Enter **S121** in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About Sleep Apnea.**"

