

Obstructive Sleep Apnea

Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) involves repeated arousals from sleep because breathing ceases when the upper airway for breathing is momentarily obstructed. OSA patients may be so sleep-deprived that their mental functions are significantly impaired and they may become a hazard to themselves or others. OSA is also associated with hypertension and heart disease.

Symptoms

- Significant daytime drowsiness
- Excessive snoring
- Impaired mental functioning, delayed reaction times, and difficulty maintaining vigilance and concentration. This has been shown to cause many accidents in the work place and while driving. People with OSA have a three-fold greater risk of a car accident than the general population.

Statistics

- The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute estimates that 18 million people suffer from OSA in the United States.
- Only 10% of people with OSA are currently receiving treatment.
- It is estimated to affect about 4% of men and 2% of women.
- Men are more likely to have OSA than women before age 50. After age 50, the risk is the same in men and women.
- Among obese patients, 70% have OSA. OSA worsens in severity and prevalence with increasing obesity.
- Among cardiac patients, 30–50% have OSA, and among patients with strokes, 60% have OSA.
- A recent study estimated that 14% of NFL football players and 34% of NFL linemen have OSA.

Management

- Diet and exercise program.
- Often, a CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) may alleviate the problem. CPAPs deliver air through a mask while a patient sleeps, which is effective in helping people get a good night's rest and avoid daytime accidents.
- In some cases, anatomical surgery may be recommended.