

Sleep Apnea

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Sleep Apnea is a common disorder where breathing stops numerous times throughout ones sleep for anywhere from 10 to 20 seconds.

During sleep not enough air flows into the lungs which causes the oxygen level of the blood to drop and finally causes the brain to tell the body to wake up.

There are two different types of sleep apnea, Central Sleep Apnea and Obstructive Sleep Apnea. Central Sleep Apnea occurs when the brain doesn't send the signal to breath to the muscles. Central Sleep Apnea mostly occurs in infants and adults with heart diseases; however, it can also be caused by various medications or high altitudes.

Obstructive Sleep Apnea occurs when the airway collapses, and in an effort to keep the proper oxygen level to the brain, the brain signals for the body to wake up.

There are a few specific groups that are most likely to develop Sleep Apnea. These groups are:

70% of obese patients have sleep apnea and the severity of sleep apnea worsens with the increase in weight.

30%-50% of patients with cardiac problems have sleep apnea

60% of patients who have had strokes

14% of NFL players and 34% of NFL linemen

Common symptoms of Sleep Apnea of course consist of inability to sleep normally at night; however, other symptoms of sleep apnea consist of high

blood pressure, and increase risk of heart problems due to the increase stress caused by the frequent pauses in breathing.

There are many different treatments for Sleep Apnea which consist of machines, surgeries, and also some simple lifestyle changes. Some of the lifestyle changes that can greatly decrease the risk of SA are losing weight for patients who are obese, not smoking, and not drinking. Surgery is also a treatment for severe cases of OSA.

Some of the most common treatments consist of Nasal, Septal, and Adrenoid surgeries which surgically open the nasal breathing passage to permit easier breathing. UPPP surgery shortens and stiffens the soft palate by partial removal of the uvula and reduction of the edge of the soft palate. Finally, the treatment which is often considered the treatment of choice is CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) which is a machine that allows pressurized air to open the breathing passage.

Sources:

- <http://www.aafp.org/afp/991115a/p/2279.html>
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