

What is Sleep Apnea?

If you snore loudly and feel very tired even after a full night's sleep, you may have sleep apnea.

Sleep apnea is a serious sleep disorder. It causes your breathing to repeatedly stop and start during sleep. There are 3 types of sleep apnea: Obstructive sleep apnea, Central sleep apnea, and complex sleep apnea syndrome

Obstructive sleep apnea, or OSA, is the most common type. OSA happens when your throat muscles relax and partially or completely blocks the flow of oxygen into your upper airway.

With central sleep apnea, or "CSA", your airway is not blocked. Instead your brain does not send signals to the muscles that control your breathing.

Complex sleep apnea happens when you have both obstructive sleep apnea and central sleep apnea.

The symptoms of obstructive and central sleep apneas overlap. The most common symptoms include: Loud snoring. You can also have sleep apnea without snoring at all. Pauses in breathing while asleep. You may not know you're doing this until a loved one tells you. Waking up repeatedly in the middle of the night. Waking up feeling short of breath or like you're choking. Dry mouth. Morning headache. Insomnia. Daytime sleepiness, which can cause drowsiness at work and while driving. Trouble concentrating and Irritability. It is also linked to mood changes such as depression and anxiety.

If you think you have sleep apnea, talk to your healthcare provider about getting tested.

Sleep apnea can affect anyone, but you may be at a higher risk if you: Were assigned male at birth; Are obese; Have a family history of sleep apnea; Smoke; Drink alcohol; Take certain medicines like sedatives and opioids; Have chronic nasal or sinus congestion; Have chronic health conditions, such as type 2 diabetes, congestive heart failure, high blood pressure, or asthma.

You can't change all these risk factors. But there are things you can do to manage your sleep apnea.

Lifestyle changes can help. These include: Losing weight, if needed; Being physically active; Quitting smoking, if you smoke; Limiting alcohol; Sleeping on your side; And practicing healthy sleep habits, such as waking up at the same time every day.

Sleep apnea can increase your risk for serious health problems, such as: Atrial fibrillation; Liver problems; Insulin resistance; Type 2 diabetes; High blood pressure; And complications with anesthesia and surgery because of breathing problems.

So, getting treatment is very important. Talk with your provider about a treatment plan that works best for you.

Living with sleep apnea can be a challenge. But maintaining a healthy lifestyle and following your treatment plan can help you finally get a good night's sleep.