

Diagnosing Sleep Apnoea Can Save Lives

In recent years we have heard more and more about Obstructive Sleep Apnoea and the life-threatening risks involved for sufferers, yet very few people know much about it.

Sleep Apnoea is an ancient disorder but it was only recently identified. In the last 40 years more information has been discovered concerning this disorder, its consequences and treatment.

People suffering from this condition stop breathing for a few seconds during sleep (apnoea) and only start breathing again normally, once sleep has been interrupted

(which may have consequences) and, generally this is followed by a loud snort. This stoppage can be merely partial, in this case called hypopnoea. Both types of breathing pauses (total or partial) cause a significant reduction of oxygen to reach the blood, which is prejudicial for the sufferer. The severity of the disorder increases with the number of apnoea/hypopnoea, which in some cases can be

extreme, numbering 500 pauses each night with a duration of 1 minute! These events are often noted only by a partner or spouse and is the reason for the patient to consult a doctor, as the patient does not realise, he suffers from this condition and can believe that he had a good night's sleep. Other frequent complaints are getting up several times during the night to urinate, waking up tired, or with a headache.

Naturally this has implications in the quality of sleep and consequent somnolence during the day, but it is quite variable. Some individuals may experience 5 episodes per hour during the night and are very tired during the day, yet others may experience over 30 episodes per hour each night, with no resulting complaints. This is what makes it so difficult to diagnose and treat. Nowadays, driving car is so indispensable that people drive even when extremely sleepy. This can result in grave road safety consequences, for both driver and others.



Unfortunately, somnolence is far from being the only consequence of sleep apnoea. Although we do not say that someone died from apnoea, just as we do not say that someone died from high cholesterol or high blood pressure, all these conditions greatly contribute towards the mortality rate caused by heart disease and strokes.

The lack of oxygen reaching our cells during the night, caused by sleep apnoea, affects all of the organs of the body, and the brain is no exception. An accelerated

degeneration of cerebral capacity is noted in these patients, with "memory loss" being one of their many complaints.

Currently treatment for sleep apnoea exists, although with variable success, depending on the method chosen and the severity of the disorder. The use of a nasal CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) is very efficient and always used in severe cases. Other treatments, such as surgery or a mouth device can be used for less severe cases.

Your Safety is our Priority.
Monitor your health. Consult your Doctor.



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