

Sleep Apnea Risks Explained

Snoring is an annoying habit, particularly for the better half. Sleep apnea, however, takes the nightly noisemaker to a whole new, often dangerous, level.

Sleep apnea is a disorder that can have terrible effects on health and overall quality of life. It's a degenerative condition that can strike at any age and, left untreated, can grow more serious over time. If you are at risk of suffering from sleep apnea, there are some steps that you can take to reduce the chances of developing the condition.

* **Keep in Shape:** This is of utmost importance. One of the main causes of sleep apnea is an excess of fatty tissue in the neck caused by obesity. This tissue can weigh down on the esophagus, causing an obstruction of the airway and, consequently, a serious case of sleep apnea. One way of diagnosing whether you need to be concerned about your fitness level is by measuring the circumference of your neck. If you find your neck measures 17 inches or more around, you could be in danger of suffering with sleep apnea.

* **Just Say No:** The use of depressants such as alcohol and sleeping pills greatly increases your chances of contracting sleep apnea. Alcohol and sleeping pills cause the muscles of the body to relax. However, when the muscles in the throat relax, they can actually obstruct the airway. If you must drink, have your last alcoholic beverage no less than four hours before going to bed. This gives your body the chance to process the alcohol in your system, reducing the chance of snoring and suffering apnea during sleep.

* **Butt Out:** Smoking is another reason that people contract sleep apnea. If you smoke, you'll have an increased amount of inflammation in the throat. Fluid retention in the upper air way can also be increased by a smoking habit. Both of these factors may add up to a serious obstruction of the airway.

* **Get Off Your Back:** Many people with sleep apnea only experience the problem when they are lying on their backs at night. However, it's hard to keep from rolling onto your back while you're in a deep sleep. Try this simple remedy to fix the problem: Place a tennis ball inside a regular sock, and then pin the sock to the back of your pajama pants. When you roll onto your back in your sleep, the tennis ball will make you uncomfortable. You'll unconsciously correct yourself, and roll back onto your side.

These are just some of the things to do to avoid a sleep apnea condition. There are many other factors that can cause the condition. Some, such as a narrow air way or old age, are unpreventable. For that reason, it is imperative that you speak with your doctor or health care professional for a proper diagnosis if you suspect that you may have sleep apnea.

If you find that you meet any of the risk factors, yet choose to ignore them, you could be setting yourself up for a serious case of sleep apnea.