

A closer look at sleep apnea and AFib



UpBeat
By Heart Rhythm Society

WHAT IS SLEEP APNEA?

Sleep apnea is a serious sleep problem that interrupts a person's breathing during their sleep. People with sleep apnea stop breathing or have shallow breathing during their sleep. This means the body and the brain do not get enough oxygen.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF SLEEP APNEA?

A person with sleep apnea will wake up when their brain doesn't get enough oxygen. This can happen hundreds of times each night. Some people may not even be aware that they are waking from sleep so often.

People living with sleep apnea may snore loudly and often wake from sleep gasping for air or have the feeling of choking. They may also feel a lot of daytime sleepiness or tiredness. Some people have trouble falling asleep and can become depressed.

Some people are more likely to get sleep apnea than others. You have a higher chance of getting sleep apnea if:

- You are male
- You are overweight
- You have a wide neck (greater than 16 inches around in women and 17 inches in men)
- You have high blood pressure
- You smoke
- You have diabetes
- You have a family history of sleep apnea



HOW IS SLEEP APNEA DIAGNOSED?

Sleep apnea is diagnosed by an overnight sleep test, which can be done at home or in a special sleep laboratory. The sleep test measures the number of times during your sleep you either stop breathing or your breathing becomes very shallow. It also measures the level of oxygen in your blood and keeps track of the brain and heart activity during sleep.

~ **100** million people

AROUND THE WORLD ARE LIVING WITH SLEEP APNEA.

WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SLEEP APNEA AND AFIB?

Each time a person with sleep apnea is startled awake by lack of oxygen during their sleep, the heart is stressed. This may lead to AFib. **About half of patients with AFib also have sleep apnea. Preventing sleep apnea makes AFib treatments (medicine and surgeries) more effective.**

Untreated sleep apnea can lead to problems like high blood pressure and diabetes, which in turn can lead to AFib. Long-term untreated sleep apnea can also cause problems with thinking and higher chance of accidents and stroke.

Talk to your doctor about sleep apnea to find out if you may need to be tested. Start by telling your doctor about any snoring or daytime sleepiness that you may have. Treating sleep apnea can improve your quality of life and lower your chance of a heart attack or stroke.

PATIENTS WITH SLEEP APNEA HAVE

4x 

the risk of developing AFib
