

Are You Tired?

by Dr. Richard Klein, Director, Michigan Head & Neck Institute

The American Medical Sleep Association estimates that over 120 million Americans suffer from some type of sleep disorder and most don't even know it.

Do you wake up fully refreshed and full of energy with good concentration?

You should. If you don't, you may have an undiagnosed sleep disorder, which could be extremely dangerous. Lack of good sound, deep sleep, even for portions of the night, can lead to serious medical complications and even death. In 2006, over 200,000 Americans died due to sleep apnea. Most of them had no idea what it was.

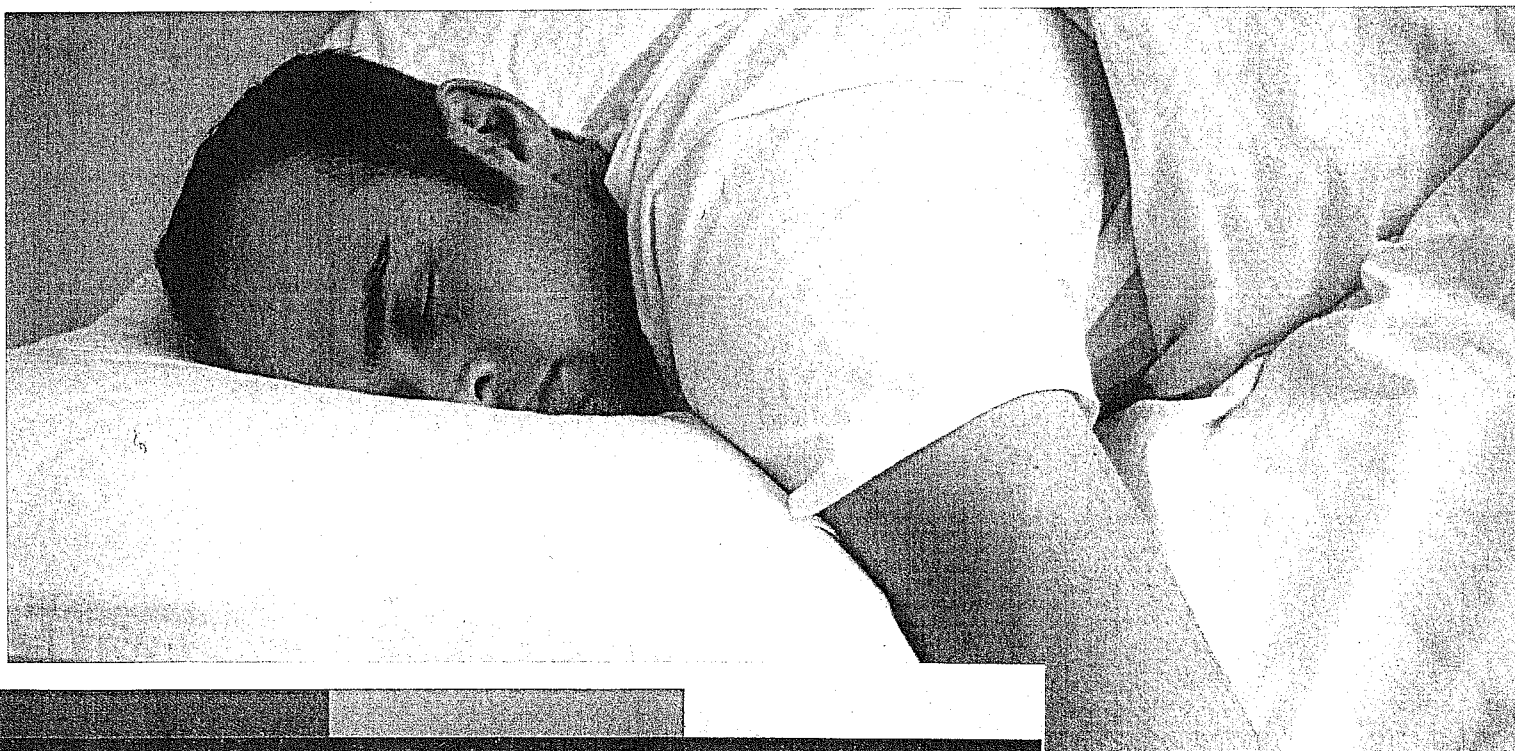
Sleep Apnea is usually caused simply by the tongue and soft tissue falling backwards in the throat during sleep. This blocks the airway and prevents breathing. Of course if we don't breathe we don't get oxygen. The brain then jump-starts our body to break up the blockage in the throat. This causes a sleep apnea victim to gasp or choke and the effect is to open the blocked windpipe. Without proper oxygen we are significantly more prone to many medical problems such as type 11 diabetes, fibromyalgia, irritable bowel syndrome, headaches, concentration problems, Attention Deficit Disorder, and daytime sleepiness.

When we sleep normally we reach a deep level of sleep called REM (Rapid Eye Movement). During this stage of sleep our brain pretty much paralyzes our skeletal muscles, which then lets them heal and rejuvenate. It's like taking your car in for a tune up every night...the motor and related parts work much more smoothly. We need this sleep to stay healthy, to think clearly, and to live longer.

If you wake up unrefreshed, are tired during the day, if you snore, or if you have headaches...you just might have a very serious...yet easily controlled sleep disorder called obstructive sleep apnea.

The American Medical Sleep Association recommendations for treatment include surgery, the use of a CPAP (a mask that blows room air into your mouth to prevent soft tissue collapse), and an Oral Appliance (a mouthpiece fabricated by a trained dentist to prevent the soft tissue from falling back in your mouth as you sleep).

If you are concerned about the quality of your life or the life of a loved one...a simple medical evaluation and sleep test can determine if you have this very treatable condition.



St. John Oakland Physicians Hospital Organization

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