

The Whitney Wire

The Quarterly Newsletter From Your Friends At Whitney Sleep Diagnostics & Consultants (WSDC)

March, 2010

Analyzing Sleep

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Is That Snoring More Than Just Annoying?

Source: National Sleep Foundation

Although snoring may be harmless for most people, it can be a symptom of a life threatening sleep disorder called sleep apnea, especially if it is accompanied by severe daytime sleepiness. Sleep apnea is characterized by pauses in breathing that prevent air from flowing into or out of a sleeping person's airways. People with sleep apnea awaken frequently during the night gasping for breath. The breathing pauses reduce blood oxygen levels, can strain the heart and cardiovascular system, and increase the risk of cardiovascular disease. Snoring on a frequent or regular basis has been directly associated with hypertension. Obesity and a large neck can contribute to sleep apnea. Sleep apnea can be treated; men and women who snore loudly, especially if pauses in the snoring are noted, should consult a physician.

You now have the ability to have your sleep concerns addressed right here at your own Hospital. Ask your Health Care Provider for a simple screening tool which can be discussed with your Provider to determine if a sleep study makes good sense for you or a loved one.

Treating sleep related breathing disorders will not only lead to more restful sleep for the snorer and those around him/her, it can reduce the risks of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and other serious health concerns.

A Message From Dr. Whitney By Dr Courtney Whitney, Board Certified Sleep Physician, Owner, Medical Director WSDC *Analyzing Sleep*

At first glance, this may seem about as interesting as watching grass grow. But once we attach the sensors that monitor brainwave, heart and lung activity, it becomes evident that the process of sleeping is an intricate one (*please see next page for more of what happens during a sleep study*). In order for you to have a good night's sleep, many things need to fall into place. When things do not go well during sleep it may or may not be evident to the sleeper that something has gone awry. If that something is not corrected, the lack of a good night's rest can result in mental and physical decline. For that reason it is my recommendation to patients, and those advising them on their health, to analyze their sleep. When there is a deviation from a good night's rest we should wonder why and, when appropriate, we should go further by monitoring your sleep to get to the root of the issue.

One of the biggest challenges in my practice is the patient who is told they snore and stop breathing when they sleep, is tired during the daytime, and just assumes that's the way he/she is supposed to feel. If this describes you, please talk with your Doctor about it. Healthy, restorative sleep can be part of your life, too.

Do you Think You Might Have A Sleep Disorder?

Yes No

- Do you snore?
- Are you excessively tired during the day?
- Have you been told you stop breathing during sleep?
- Do you have a history of Hypertension?
- Is your neck size > 17 inches (male) or > 16 inches (female)?
- Do you wake up to use the bathroom more than twice a night?
- Have you ever fallen asleep while driving?

Answering "yes" to two (or more) of these questions may be a positive screen for Obstructive Sleep Apnea. Patient should consider talking with their Health Care Provider about a referral for a sleep evaluation.

Sleep Fact:

Untreated Sleep Apnea can increase the risk for high blood pressure, heart attack, stroke, obesity and diabetes

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How Does A Sleep Study Work?

Sleep Studies are painless and designed to encourage easy, normal sleep. Monitors record a patient's breathing rate, oxygen levels, EKG (heart rhythm) and EEG (brain waves), as well as the movement of eyes, chin, and legs. We even measure the volume of your snoring.

The patient arrives at the local hospital at around 8:30 PM, and leaves at around 6:30-7:00 AM. If the patient is showing signs of Sleep Apnea after 2-4 hours of sleep, they will be fitted with a CPAP device and tested during the second half of the night to determine appropriate airway pressure.

About a week after the study, the patient has a follow up appointment where they will get a chance to watch themselves as they slept during their study. If CPAP is prescribed, the patient will be fitted with the most appropriate mask for their needs and begin CPAP therapy that night.

Since treatment of Sleep Apnea can have such a positive impact on a patient's overall health profile, Medicare and most insurance companies cover the cost of overnight sleep studies.

CPAP Talk By Susan Gunwall, LPN, WSDC Clinical Coordinator and Director of Operations

Nasal congestion, irritation and runny nose that seems to be caused by using CPAP.

Your nose is your airway's humidifier. It warms and humidifies the air that you breathe. If the CPAP begins to dry your nose, your body will increase the production of mucus in the nose to add more moisture to the inhaled air. Unfortunately, this may cause nasal congestion and a runny nose. In some cases the dryness will cause irritation, burning and sneezing. These symptoms are often alleviated by the use of a heated humidifier with your CPAP, this is a water pan that sits on a heating unit and is attached to the CPAP. Some sleep specialists order a heated humidifier with the initial CPAP order. If you do not have heated humidifier you should contact your sleep specialist. If you already have a heated humidifier and still experience these symptoms you will require follow up with your CPAP or sleep specialist. Heating the air and the water will allow the air to carry more moisture as it travels to your nose (just like the summer air is more humid than winter air). In almost all cases this resolves nasal congestion and irritation caused by CPAP.

Continuous
Positive
Airway
Pressure

CPAP therapy is a painless, non-invasive way to treat Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA)

Sleep Fact:

It is estimated that over 18 million American adults have Obstructive Sleep Apnea

About Whitney Sleep Diagnostics & Consultants

Created by Dr. Courtney Whitney of the Whitney Sleep Center in Plymouth, MN, Whitney Sleep Diagnostics & Consultants (WSDC) serves the sleep medicine needs of Hospitals in less populated areas.

Hospitals that partner with WSDC, are able to offer a high quality, AASM accredited sleep medicine program to its Patients right at their home town Hospital. WSDC diagnoses and treats all 84 known sleep disorders. If you are a Patient reading this in a waiting room—your Hospital partners with WSDC.

Patients who feel they may have a sleep disorder are encouraged to talk to their Physician about their symptoms. A simple one page screening form can often help determine the need for an overnight sleep study.

Partnering Hospitals will soon provide quarterly CPAP clinics where CPAP users can bring their equipment to be inspected and obtain replacement CPAP accessories as needed.

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