



Sleep Apnea is More Than Just Snoring Loudly

Sleep apnea is a sleep related disorder that affects hundreds of thousands of Canadians and more than twice as many men than woman. It affects adults of all ages but seems to be more prevalent in adults around the age of 45 years.

According to a Canadian Community Health survey, 26% of Canadians have the symptoms and risk factors associated with the disorder. The word apnea means 'no breathing' and there are two types of sleep apnea both of which repeatedly cause you to stop breathing while you sleep.

Obstructive sleep apnea is the most common and occurs when your throat muscles relax while you are asleep and stop you from breathing steadily.

Central sleep apnea happens when your brain doesn't send the

right signals to the muscles that control your breathing.

Both types of sleep apnea have the same symptoms including loud snoring, morning headaches, insomnia, problems focussing during the day, stopping breathing for ten seconds or more at a time throughout the night and startled waking sometimes with shortness of breath.

If you do have any of these symptoms it is important that you talk to your doctor about them as sleep apnea can lead to high blood pressure, congestive heart failure, depression and even liver problems.

There are many healthy changes you can make to help lessen the severity of sleep apnea. Quitting smoking and avoiding alcohol and sleeping pills which both relax the back of your throat which, in turn, makes sleep apnea symptoms



Sleeping on your side or your back is the best sleep position for those people who have sleep apnea.

worse.

The Mayo Clinic suggests that people with sleep apnea sleep on their side or stomach rather than their backs. When sleeping on your back, your tongue and the soft palate tend to gravitate to the back of your throat which obstructs your breathing. Sleeping on your side keeps your airway more open which means you will breathe more regularly throughout the night.

If you have been a back

sleeper for most of your life, altering your sleep position will be a difficult thing to achieve especially if your old mattress has your body's shape indented into it. Trying to sleep on your side will put a new pressure on your shoulders and pelvis making you uncomfortable -

especially if your old mattress is made with springs.

If you decide to look at a new mattress that can actually make it easier to learn to sleep on your side or stomach look at memory foam, latex and gel mattresses which will all provide

exceptional pressure relief while offering correct spinal alignment.

Don't forget that when you sleep on your side your head is higher off the bed than when you sleep on your back. Your old, thin pillow will not comfortably support your head and neck and a thicker pillow will eliminate future aches and pains as you learn to sleep on your side.

Our goal is to help you sleep better. We can show you which mattresses and pillows are the most comfortable for side sleepers. You can try them all out to find the best one for you which will help you lessen the effects of sleep apnea so you can experience a healthier sleep.

Jim Conlon

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