

## COLUMN

# Sleep apnea is also a cancer risk?

Sleep apnea has been linked to many conditions including heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and strokes. As more awareness of this life-threatening disorder comes to the foreground, health providers and patients have become quite concerned about getting people diagnosed and finding them proper treatment. I have been treating sleep apnea patients for over 15 years and even diagnosed myself with moderate sleep apnea! Needless to say, I know how to treat myself and have been wearing a dental sleep appliance to treat my condition. However, I am really concerned about the latest information about sleep apnea. As newer research surfaces, findings show that many sleep apnea sufferers also have a higher risk than others of cancer. With all of this new information, people need to be aware of their risk factors and lifestyle habits that may be contributing to something that is directly affecting their health and life span.

### What is Sleep Apnea?

Sleep apnea is a sleep disorder that causes dangerous pauses in breathing during sleep. According to the American Sleep Apnea Association, up to 22 million Americans have sleep apnea, although many of these cases are undiagnosed. This condition is very concerning for sleep doctors and dentists because it causes the body to become deprived of oxygen at night and may coincide with other life-threatening diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and cancer.

**The most common symptoms of sleep apnea are snoring and daytime fatigue. Additional symptoms include:**

- Morning headaches
- TMJ symptoms
- Lack of energy



Dentally Speaking

by Jeffrey S. Haddad D.D.S.

**during the day**

- Migraines
- A sore throat or dry mouth upon waking
- Mood problems, including irritability
- Insomnia

Treatment includes making lifestyle modifications, including weight loss, quitting smoking, and limiting alcohol consumption. When lifestyle changes don't help, therapies such as a CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machine are considered. Unfortunately, only 30% of patients are able to tolerate CPAP therapy, so many people get frustrated when they attempt using a CPAP and fail. Luckily, new research shows that a properly made dental appliance is actually a superior solution to CPAP for mild and moderate sleep apnea! Dental sleep appliances are extremely comfortable and maintain your airway eliminating your snoring and apneas, and people are 90% compliant with them.

In 2013, researchers in Spain followed 5200 cancer-free patients with sleep apnea for seven years and monitored how much their oxygen levels dropped while they slept. Here is the shocking finding: people with severe sleep apnea had a 68% increased risk of developing ANY kind of cancer. It is thought that the risk is associated with increased hypoxia, a condition where the body is deprived of oxygen.

**Another study from the University of Wisconsin found people with sleep-disordered breathing are five times more likely to die from cancer than people without sleep apnea.** One recent study reported in the *Journal of Sleep Medicine* shows moderate and severe cases of sleep apnea are also associated with increased cancer risk. That study showed an increased risk for "all cancer

mortality" due to cancer. The 20-year study showed that people with moderate to severe cases of sleep apnea are two-and-a-half times more likely to develop cancer and three times more likely to die from cancer. The authors noted these findings

confirmed previous research conducted by American and Spanish researchers. I unknowingly suffered with undiagnosed sleep apnea for several years, never knowing why I felt tired throughout the day, struggling to get through my workday

without yearning for a nap, and realizing that I was keeping my wife awake all night with my snoring. I was a selfish bed partner! I have been wearing a sleep appliance for over 10 years and it **CHANGED MY LIFE**

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## Dr. Haddad *Continued from page 11*

My wife is able to sleep peacefully next to me, I have more energy throughout the day, and I now know that I am avoiding the scary effects of sleep apnea such as heart disease, diabetes, strokes, and even cancer. Do you suffer from symptoms of sleep apnea like daytime fatigue, irritability, or lack of energy during the day? Do you have issues with high blood pressure, diabetes, insomnia or morning headaches? If you want to be healthier and live life longer, seek out the proper health provider who can test you to determine if you have sleep apnea and

get it treated. It could be the best decision you could make to change your everyday quality of life.

Jeffrey S. Haddad, DDS of Doolin & Haddad Advanced Dentistry, completed his dental education at the University of Michigan in 2001. Dr. Haddad is a fellow of the prestigious Las Vegas Institute for Advanced Dental Studies. He lectures nationally on cosmetic dentistry, TMJ and sleep disorders and dental implants.

For more information, visit [www.rochesteradvanceddentistry.com](http://www.rochesteradvanceddentistry.com).