

COLUMN

Do you have High Blood Pressure? Do you suffer from Acid Reflux or Diabetes? Sleep Apnea may be a factor

Sleep apnea is a condition that affects many people, from young to old, and shows no preference between males and females. This condition can lead to devastating side effects if it is left untreated.

Unfortunately, most people are not aware of any sleep issues and therefore this deadly condition goes unnoticed and untreated. Did you know that 1/3 of all Americans have sleep disorders during their lives? Considering 1 in 3 people in our country are affected by this condition, I feel sleep apnea is something that everyone should educate themselves on.

Sleep apnea is serious sleep disorder in which breathing repeatedly stops, sometimes for 10 seconds or more, throughout the night. Your brain and heart don't receive enough oxygen as a result of obstructive sleep apnea. This generally leads to increased blood pressure and heart rate, and can put you at greater risk of heart attack and stroke. Other associated disorders are diabetes, heart disease, and gastric reflux (G.E.R.D.). The effects of sleep apnea are varied but there is one proven and very dangerous side effect. When a person suffers from sleep apnea, their body is not getting the oxygen it needs in order to function properly.

Here is how sleep apnea affects some of the above-mentioned conditions:

High Blood Pressure (Hypertension): Many patients with sleep apnea have been found to have high blood pressure due to the extra work that the heart gets in order to compensate for the lack of oxygen. If the condition is not treated, the strength of the heart



Dentally Speaking
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will deteriorate and the heart will begin pumping blood at a much lower force than is necessary to continue the proper function of the body. The heart is the first organ that experiences the results of untreated sleep apnea. **Eighty**

percent of the time, drug resistant hypertension (Blood pressure that cannot be controlled by medications) is a result of untreated sleep apnea!

If you are having trouble controlling your blood pressure with medications, this may be the answer you are looking for.

Acid Reflux or G.E.R.D. (Gastroesophageal reflux disease): Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is a condition in which the stomach contents (food or liquid) leak backwards from the stomach into the esophagus (the tube from the mouth to the stomach). This action can irritate the esophagus, causing heartburn and other symptoms. Why is this related to sleep apnea? When a person stops breathing, the sudden alert from the body to begin breathing again causes the person to intensely inhale causing this regurgitation from the stomach. Most people would never associate their acid reflux symptoms with sleep apnea, but there are numerous studies showing the direct relationship between these two conditions.

Diabetes: Diabetes and sleep problems often go hand in hand. Diabetes can cause sleep loss, and there's evidence that not sleeping well can increase your risk of developing diabetes. A man over age 65 with type 2 diabetes has a 67 percent chance of having sleep apnea; for older women, the chance is almost 50 percent.

Besides making it difficult to get a good night's sleep, sleep apnea increases stress on the body, causing blood sugar levels to rise. Therefore, it is especially important for people with type 2 diabetes to recognize sleep apnea and have it treated. Many diabetics are struggling with controlling their diabetes because they have an undiagnosed sleep apnea problem. It is estimated that at least 80 percent of diabetic patients, if properly screened and studied, will be found to have OSA.

Common Side Effects of Sleep apnea:

- Heart attack
- Stroke
- Blood Pressure/ Hypertension
- Pulmonary Hypertension
- Diabetes
- GERD/Digestion
- Obesity
- Headaches (Cluster

headaches are 80 percent predictive for sleep apnea)

If you suspect you have sleep apnea, please talk to your physician or dentist. As a courtesy to our patients, we utilize the ApneaLink home monitoring system. This screening tool gives us data on snoring and sleep patterns, including any sleep apneas occurring throughout the night. For many people, exploring this potential problem can unveil the root cause of other conditions they are experiencing. At that point, a proper treatment can be recommended for the patient depending on the severity of their sleep disorder.

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For more information, visit www.rochesteradvanced-dentistry.com.

He who takes medicine and neglects to diet wastes the skill of his doctors. -Chinese Proverb