



Obstructive Sleep Apnoea

What is it?

Obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA) is a relatively common condition where the walls of the throat relax and narrow during sleep, interrupting normal breathing. This may lead to regularly interrupted sleep, which can have a big impact on quality of life and increases the risk of developing certain conditions.

When should you seek medical advice?

If you think you may be suffering from OSA then it is recommended to seek medical advice. Your doctor may prescribe a visit to a sleep centre where your sleep can be monitored over a night stay.

Complications

OSA can have a significant impact on your quality of life, causing problems such as poor performance at work and placing a strain on your relationships. Poorly controlled OSA may also increase your risk of:

- Developing high blood pressure (hypertension)
- Having a stroke or heart attack
- Developing an irregular heartbeat (Atrial fibrillation)
- Developing Type 2 diabetes

Are there differing types?

There are two types of OSA breathing interruption:

- Apnoea– where the muscles and soft tissues in the throat relax and collapse sufficiently to cause a total blockage of the airway; it's called an apnoea when the airflow is blocked for 10 seconds or more
- Hypopnoea– a partial blockage of the airway that results in an airflow reduction of greater than 50 % for 10 seconds or more

Causes of Obstructive Sleep Apnoea

- Being Overweight – Increases bulk of soft tissue in the neck.
- Being male – Differing patterns of body fat distribution
- Over 40 years of age – Can occur at any age but is more common over 40.
- Having a large neck – A neck size of 17 inches or more increases your risk.
- Sedative medicines – Such as sleeping tablets or tranquillisers.
- Alcohol before sleep – Can make OSA worse.
- Smoking – Constricts the airways.
- Menopause – Changes in hormone levels.
- Nasal congestion – deviated septum, nasal polyps.

What are the Symptoms?

- Loud Snoring
- Noisy and laboured breathing
- Repeated short periods where breathing is interrupted by gasping or snorting.
- Night sweats
- Frequent waking (due to lack of oxygen)

Treatment Options

- Lifestyle changes – Losing weight, cutting down on alcohol, sleeping on your side.
- Using a continuous positive airway pressure device – prevent your airways closing by use of compressed air.
- Wearing a mandibular advancement device – Gum shield fitted around teeth to hold jaw and tongue forward.
- Surgery – If OSA thought to be the result of a physical problem but this is considered a last result. Treatments are likely to be lifelong in most cases.

Did you know?

Research has shown someone who has been deprived of sleep because of OSA may be up to 12 times more likely to be involved in a car accident.



Stay Alert, Stay Safe

[Find out more on Yammer or the Fatigue Reduction site](#)

