

Wake up to the dangers of sleep apnea

Drowsy during the day? Snoring every night? You could have sleep apnea. This is a condition in which nighttime breathing briefly stops during sleep—sometimes as often as 20 or 30 times per hour. Other signs of sleep apnea may include the following:

- Choking and/or gasping at night
- Headaches upon awakening
- Anxiety
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability

If you notice symptoms of sleep apnea, tell your health care provider. This disorder may result in heart rhythm problems, high blood pressure or even a heart attack or stroke. Plus, the daytime sleepiness that results from sleep apnea may cause traffic and work accidents.

Mild sleep apnea can sometimes be treated with lifestyle changes, such as:

- Losing weight
- Avoiding alcohol, tobacco and sleeping pills
- Sleeping on your side, rather than your stomach or back

The most common and effective medical treatment for sleep apnea is continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP). With this form of treatment, a mask attached to an air pump keeps breathing passages open during sleep by providing a controlled amount of air pressure. Less frequently used treatments for more serious cases of sleep apnea include dental appliances or surgery to open blocked airways.



Did you know?
Untreated sleep apnea can lead to memory loss and other cognitive problems.

What does your **health care provider** mean?

When you hear these words, it is important to know what they actually mean.

If you hear...	It really means...
Atrial fibrillation	This type of abnormal heart rhythm can lead to the formation of a blood clot in the heart. Pieces of this clot can then pass into the brain and cause a stroke.
Carotid artery disease	Condition in which the arteries on either side of the neck, which supply blood and oxygen to the brain, are blocked by a fatty substance called plaque. This can put you at increased risk for stroke.
Cognitive	Thinking, reasoning or remembering

Remember — if you hear words you do not understand, always ask for an explanation.