

Sleep Disorders Services

What are sleep disorders?

If you regularly have problems getting a good night's sleep, you could have a sleep disorder. The National Commission on Sleep Disorders Research estimates that 40 million Americans are chronically ill with sleep disorders and that an additional 20-30 million experience intermittent sleep related problems. Left untreated, sleep disorders cause fatigue, irritability, depression, lost productivity and other more serious physical and emotional problems.

The most common sleep disorders are:

- **Sleep apnea** It is a treatable disorder in which a person stops breathing during sleep, often hundreds of times during the night.
- **Chronic insomnia** It is a treatable disorder in which people continually have problems falling asleep and staying asleep.
- **Narcolepsy** It is a treatable disorder in which a person falls asleep suddenly many times a day.

Diagnosing a sleep disorder

The first step in diagnosing a sleep disorder is talking to your physician about your symptoms. When sleep apnea is suspected, your physician may suggest a sleep diagnostic test.

Sleep Diagnostic Test

Saint Elizabeth's Medical Center offers comprehensive testing for sleep apnea and other disorders. This test evaluates the amount and quality of your sleep. The test is performed at Saint Elizabeth's during normal sleep hours, from 8:00 p.m. to 6:30 a.m. the following morning. In preparation for the test, a respiratory therapist specializing in sleep disorders, will place sensors on your head, chest and legs.

While you are sleeping, the therapist monitors:

- *Brain waves*
- *Eye movements*
- *Muscle activity*
- *Breathing*
- *Heart rate*
- *Oxygen levels*
- *Body position*



SLEEP APNEA

Risk Factors

- Overweight
- Age (over 40)
- Physical abnormalities of the nose, throat and upper airway
- Family history
- Smoking and alcohol use

Symptoms

- Chronic, loud snoring
- Gasping or choking episodes during sleep
- Pauses in breathing while you sleep
- Daytime sleepiness
- Headaches
- Trouble concentrating and remembering
- Overweight
- High blood pressure
- Kicking and twitching movements while asleep
- Upon waking, feeling non-refreshed

Treating sleep apnea

If you are experiencing many apneas (you stop breathing for a short period of time), the therapist will continue the test by asking you to wear a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) mask. Attached to the mask is a pump that blows a steady stream of air into your airway. This device is one of the most effective ways to treat sleep apnea.

Your test results are recorded on a computer and then sent to a physician specializing in sleep disorders for interpretation. Recommendations are presented to Saint Elizabeth's and your physician. If the results confirm that you have a sleep disorder, your physician will review possible treatment options based on the severity of your disorder. These may include:

- CPAP
- Referral to an ENT physician
- Lifestyle modifications (weight loss, stop smoking, changing sleep positions, medications)
- Oral appliances
- Surgery

Does insurance cover testing?

Most insurance providers cover the cost of the diagnostic sleep test and CPAP devices. Because every insurance plan varies, you should check with your carrier about specific coverage.

What's Your Snore Score?

Your answers to this quiz will help you decide whether you may suffer from sleep apnea:

- Are you a loud, habitual snorer? Do you feel tired and groggy on awakening?
 - Are you often sleepy during waking hours?
 - Are you overweight?
- Have you been observed to choke, gasp, or hold your breath during sleep?

If you or someone close to you answers "yes" to any of the above questions, you should discuss your symptoms and need for a sleep diagnostic test with your physician.

Source: American Sleep Apnea Association



DANGERS if left untreated

- High blood pressure
- Serious heart conditions
- Stroke
- Diabetes
- Depression
- Impotence
- Memory loss
- Increased motor vehicle or work accidents

Referral Information

A physician referral is required. If you are concerned about your sleeping patterns, talk to your physician. Treatment can help you regain your quality of life.

To learn more about Saint Elizabeth's Sleep Disorders Services, call:
651-565-4531, ext. 3333.