

GOOD SLEEP EQUALS GOOD HEALTH

Kuntal Avashia, MD

Imagine yourself travelling to work via a local train in the morning and the train derails. This occurred in 2013 in a NY city suburb as the train driver fell asleep, failing to slow down the train as it approached a curve. The train was going 82 mph on a recommended 30mph curve. It was later noted the driver of the train had severe obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). OSA is a common breathing disorder that occurs during sleep. It is characterized by recurrent collapse in the upper airway during sleep which leads to a person to stop breathing causing low oxygenation and poor sleep. Those with OSA are victims of unrestful sleep and day time sleepiness. OSA is under screened and therefore underdiagnosed. Approximately 5.9 million U.S. adults are diagnosed with OSA, but 23.5 million remain undiagnosed.

OSA can occur in any age group from children to elderly. Risk factors for OSA in the children is commonly due to enlarged tonsils and obesity. Even though OSA can occur in children of any age, it is more common between the age groups of 2-6. In the adults, the risk factors of OSA are older age, male sex or postmenopausal women, enlarged neck circumference, obesity, family history and upper airway abnormality. There is a strong association between OSA and obesity. As the body mass index (BMI) increases the incidence of OSA also increases. However, even those with normal body weight can have OSA. Those with enlarged neck circumference of 17 inches or higher for men and 16 inches or higher for women have increased risk for OSA. Characteristic anatomy independent of body weight such as an overbite, small lower jaw, enlarged tongue size, large tonsils, nasal septal deviation and nasal polyps canal also cause narrow airways and lead to OSA. Family history is commonly noted during evaluation of patients with OSA.

Children with OSA can experience behavioral and learning difficulties, hyperactivity (commonly mistaken for ADHD), fatigue, cardiovascular complication, impaired growth including failure to thrive. Adults with OSA experience a number of daytime and nighttime symptoms. The nighttime symptoms that most experience are snoring, poor sleep, increased urination at night, choking or gasping for air, palpitations, chest pain and sweating. The daytime symptoms are sleepiness and fatigue, mood disturbances, poor concentration, morning headache, awakening with dry mouth and decreased libido.

Adverse outcomes of untreated OSA are serious and can be life threatening. Untreated OSA has increased risk for cardiovascular complications such as hypertension, pulmonary hypertension, coronary artery disease, congestive heart failure, arrhythmias (atrial fibrillation) and stroke. Patient with OSA have increased prevalence of insulin resistance and diabetes. Motor vehicle accidents are two to three times more common in patients with OSA. Other medical conditions that can worsen due to untreated OSA are reflux, depression, mood disorders. There are various treatment options of OSA which include continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP), a type of mask that helps one breath at night. There are non-CPAP modalities such as mouth pieces that are made by a dentist and other newer modalities.

Olean Medical Group is working with the experts at Sleep Insights to identify and treat common sleep disorders including OSA, central sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome, insomnia, narcolepsy, shift work sleep disorder and more.

Do you have Obstructive Sleep Apnea? Review the following questions to determine if you might be at risk. Do you snore loudly? Do you often feel tired, fatigued, or sleepy during the daytime, even after a

"good" night's sleep? Has anyone ever observed you stop breathing during your sleep? Do you have or are you being treated for high blood pressure? Is your BMI greater than 35? Are you older than 50 years of age? Does your neck size measure more than 16 inch (for women) and 17 inch (for male)? Are you male or a postmenopausal woman?

If your responses are YES to 3 or more of these questions, please speak with your primary care provider. He or she can answer any questions you have and if need be, refer you to a sleep specialist. A sleep specialist is able to provide consultations, overnight in-lab diagnostic testing, home sleep testing, treatment and follow up. The processes are fairly simple and the goal is to improve oxygenation at night and improve sleep quality resulting in better health.

Dr. Avashia has been practicing at the Olean Medical Group for the past two years. He is board certified in Internal Medicine and Sleep Medicine. He and his family live in the Olean area.