

THE FOUR PILLARS TO HEALTH & WELLNESS

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HEALTH

Obstructive Sleep Apnea

by Dominic Dizon, MD

Normally during sleep, air moves through the throat and in and out of the lungs at a regular rhythm. In a person with sleep apnea, air movement is periodically diminished or stopped. In obstructive sleep apnea, breathing is abnormal because of narrowing or closure of the throat, usually from the tongue blocking the oropharynx during sleep or from a thick neck or huge tonsils.

Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) is a serious condition that can affect long term health. Approximately 25 percent of adults are at risk for sleep apnea and men are more commonly affected than women. Other risk factors include middle and older age, being overweight or obese, having a small mouth and throat, and thick neck (greater than 17 inches in men or 16 inches in women).

The main symptoms of OSA are loud snoring, fatigue, and daytime sleepiness. Other symptoms may include one or more of the following:

- Restless sleep
- Awakening with choking, gasping, or smothering
- Morning headaches, dry mouth, or sore throat
- Waking frequently to urinate
- Awakening unrefreshed, groggy
- Low energy, difficulty concentrating, memory impairment

When you or your loved ones have any of these symptoms, it is important that you let your primary care provider know so they can refer you to a sleep specialist for diagnosis. This is easily done with a sleep study done at your home or in a sleep center. Once diagnosed, your specialist can recommend treatment typically consisting of a CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) machine.



Early diagnosis is extremely important since complications of untreated obstructive sleep apnea include dangerous arrhythmias (irregular heart rhythms), congestive heart failure, heart attacks, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, and sudden death.

Besides fitting you for a CPAP machine, a specialist can also recommend other treatment modalities such as weight loss, improving sleep hygiene including adjusting sleep position, avoiding alcohol and other sedatives, dental appliances, and surgical procedures to reshape structures in the oropharynx such as uvulopalatopharyngoplasty (UPPP).

Questions? Please contact:

Dominic Dizon: wellness@dioceseoffresno.org