

Keeping you informed and up to date on your health care at Samuel U. Rodgers Health Center

## Sleep Apnea



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### What is Sleep Apnea?

Sleep apnea is a common condition that occurs when your breathing stops and restarts many times while you sleep. This can prevent your body from getting enough oxygen. If someone tells you that you snore or gasp for air during sleep, you may want to talk to your healthcare provider. You may also want to ask your provider about sleep apnea if you experience other symptoms of poor sleep quality, such as excessive daytime sleepiness.

### There Are Two Types of Sleep Apnea.

- **Obstructive sleep apnea**, also called OSA, happens when your upper airway becomes blocked many times while you sleep. The blockage can reduce or completely stop airflow. This is the most common type of sleep apnea. Factors such as obesity, large tonsils, or changes in your hormone levels can narrow your airway. Any of these factors could increase your risk for obstructive sleep apnea.
- **Central sleep apnea** occurs when your brain does not send the signals needed to breathe. Health conditions that affect how your brain controls your airways and chest muscles can cause central sleep apnea.

To diagnose sleep apnea, your provider may have you do a sleep study. Breathing devices, such as continuous positive air pressure (CPAP) machines, and lifestyle changes are common sleep apnea treatments. If these treatments do not work, your provider may recommend surgery to correct the problem that is causing your sleep apnea. If your sleep apnea is not diagnosed or treated, you may not get enough quality sleep. This can lead to issues with concentrating, making decisions, remembering things, or controlling your behavior. Untreated sleep apnea increases the risk for stroke, heart attack, and other serious problems.

About 50 to 70 million Americans have a sleep disorder. To learn about NHLBI sleep research and find more sleep-related information, visit the Sleep Health Education and Awareness pages.

