

# All About Sleep Disorders



## Your Journey through Sleep Disorders

Lack of sleep creates a grumpy, agitated creature that people just don't like being around. And in the end – it could kill you!

Sleep, plain and simple, is an essential part of your daily life. **Lost sleep cheats you out of the opportunity to refresh your mind, body and spirit.** It affects your behavior, mood and performance. Sleep determines who you are, what you do and how you do it throughout the day.

Without enough sleep – **your entire personality is altered.** You can't concentrate, make decisions or properly follow instructions. You are a lot more likely to make huge errors in judgment which can lead to **catastrophic consequences.** Lack of sleep leaves you lethargic and you have less patience for people; friends, loved-ones, co-workers, acquaintances. People like you less (a lot less) when you are tired – you not exactly the life of the party.

Your attention, memory and response time are all significantly affected when you are tired. While a lot of **these characteristics may apply to you, you don't necessarily connect them to signs of sleep loss.**

Your grumpiness isn't necessarily all your fault. A **sleep disorder is a medical condition.** It's defined by the amount of sleep you are getting combined with the quality of sleep you are getting. Some people are affected with disorders so serious; it interferes with their everyday **physical, mental and emotion performance.**



## You know the old saying “you can sleep when you’re dead . . . . “

You know that getting enough sleep on a regular basis benefits numerous areas of your life. If your body doesn’t have enough time to rejuvenate itself while you sleep, your health could be in serious trouble. **Hypertension, obesity, depression, diabetes, heart attack, stroke, coronary artery disease, abnormal heart rhythms, convulsions, memory problems, slowed thinking, irritability and mood swings . . .** need we go on? Each and every one of them – linked to poor quality and quantity of sleep.



## Common Sleep Disorders

While over 100 types of sleep disorders have been defined - there are three major ones which you are most likely aware of; **snoring, sleep apnea and insomnia.**

### Snoring:

They say *half of all marriages end in divorce. I'll bet you the majority of those divorcees snored.*

### Craig's story:

I never really gave much thought to what was really going on. Every night, I would go to bed and every morning I would wake up. Granted, I always **woke groggy and irritated**, never feeling fully refreshed – but I honestly never paid it that much attention.

A couple years ago I landed a job that required me to live in a base camp for four months. The living quarters were tight and there were two guys to a room. One morning, my bunkmate Mike just staring at me with this evil glint in his eye. He practically screamed: “Man – I cannot live with you anymore! **Your snoring is out of control.** Do you even manage to get some sleep between the logs you are sawing?”

Oh – apparently I was a serious snorer. I was **embarrassed and discouraged**. I didn't want to be **such an irritation** to Mike. From that point on, I was more and more sensitive of my sleep habits and tried everything I could think of. I would sleep on my back, on my side, on my stomach. I would shoot nasal spray up my nose before bed. I wouldn't eat before bed, hoping that a heavy meal was the cause of my snoring. I would let Mike fall asleep first. I was determined to stop snoring. Every morning, Mike would be **more and more agitated** to the point where it drove a serious wedge in our friendship.

**I realized my snoring was just more than a casual nuisance.** I decided to do a little research and the next time I went home, I mentioned it to my dentist. After discussing the options available to me, we decided on an appropriate treatment. Now, I can sleep anywhere with anyone around and no one complains about how I keep them up all night. Mike did not want to stay my roommate but now, he says the difference is night and day. The **added bonus** is now I wake up **invigorated and revitalized** as opposed to the sluggish me that used to greet the morning.

### **You can relate – who hasn't elbowed someone in the ribs.**

Everyone has a snoring story they can relate to, whether you're the culprit or someone you know has kept you awake from their snoring. Forty-five percent of adults snore at least on occasion. Where it starts to become a **severe health concern is when snoring is so frequent and recurring** that it robs you of a decent night's sleep.



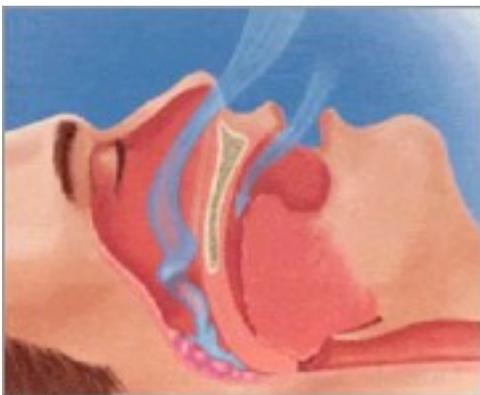
## Music of the night. What is snoring anyway?

Snoring is the sound made by vibrations of the soft palate and other tissues found in the nose, mouth and throat. **When you take a mouthful of air, vibrations** inside your upper airway **contribute to the noise**. The vibrations are caused by a partial blockage, located anywhere from the tip of your nose down to your vocal chords.

As you fall asleep, the airway from your nose to your windpipe narrows and the soft tissues along them vibrate as you breathe. Simply put, your body generates this 'music of the night' when your **breathing passage is obstructed**. This results in the snoring. The snoring ranges from a gentle buzz to the sound of a Mack truck tearing down the highway.

Snoring by itself, isn't considered life-threatening. It does, however, **compromise the quality of sleep** that you and a lot of times, everyone in your house, obtains. Although snoring is usually considered a minor annoyance, if you snore you often times suffer from a severe impairment in your lifestyle. **Your quality of life is jeopardized** – both physically and emotionally.

Snoring can originate from the nose, oropharynx or the base of the tongue. Recently it has been discovered that the tongue plays a significantly larger role in the frequency of snoring than was previously believed.



## Why You Snore

There are many variables to consider when determining why a person snores. It's not a black and white issue. Many times, a combination of factors all contribute to why you snore.

Some variables to consider:

### Gender

Men have narrower air passages than women making them more likely to snore.

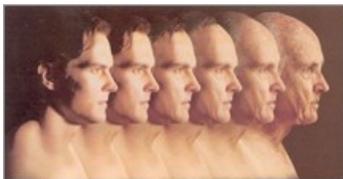
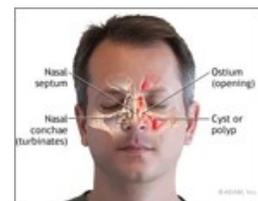


### Heredity

You can inherit a narrow throat or a number of other physical deformities which can contribute to the cause of your snoring: a fleshy uvula, enlarged tonsils and/or adenoids all contribute and are inclined to block your air passages.

### Nasal Blockage

A nasal blockage can be contributed to allergies, asthma, colds, and sinus problems or a deviated septum.



### Age

Flesh and throat muscles tend to lose some of their elasticity and become flabby, the older we get.

## Alcohol / Drugs

Either drugs or alcohol can relax throat muscles and in turn, is allows fatty tissue in the throat area to sag and block your airflow.



## Obesity

Obesity increases the fatty tissue in your throat area and you are pre-disposed to difficult breathing.

## Sleeping Posture

Sleeping on your back can intensify your snoring as the flesh of the throat relaxes and block airways.



While any of these factors can lead to the cause of your snoring, your dentist can best assess and determine which treatment option is best for you.

## Why snoring is destructive and damaging the quality of your life.

If you were asked why you wanted to control your snoring – you would answer because other people are complaining. What you actually fail to realize is **snoring takes a heavy toll on you personally.**

Because you aren't jolted awake by your own snoring, you are more concerned with others around you. **You probably don't even realize the damage you are doing to your own body.** Snoring is your body's way of telling you that you aren't getting enough air into your system. Whether your airway is restricted or your muscles are too weak to operate properly; either way it's imperative to understand your snoring triggers, before determining treatment methods.

When you strip it down to the basics and really observe what snoring does to a body, **the results may shock you**. Snoring puts extreme pressure on your body because of the struggle it's enduring to take in oxygen. This added strain results in **high blood pressure**, added stress on your arteries and it multiplies the odds of **strokes, hypertension and heart conditions**. Studies have indicated those who snore are 4-times more likely to have a stroke over their non-snorer counterparts.

If you are a frequent and constant snorer, your body isn't getting the rest it needs. The snoring **interferes with your breathing and it restricts your oxygen intake**. You may not wake during the night but **your body is continuously struggling to breathe**. When you limit your oxygen supply you stop taking full, cleansing breaths into your lungs, resulting in poor sleep quality. Deep, restful sleep each night is needed to rejuvenate the body, balance your stress hormones and improve your memory, among a multitude of other rewards.

**Snoring is annoying**. It's frustrating for you. It's irritating for your bed partner, for your family and for your entire household. And while it may be annoying for everyone, **it may also be an indicator of something a lot more serious**. If your snoring is loud and irritating enough that it's bothering others *OR* if you are gasping and grunting in addition to your snoring, you need to look into it. It's **extremely important that you don't dismiss loud snoring as just a nuisance**. Often times, it's the pre-cursor to something a lot more serious.



## Sleep Apnea:

More than just minor suffering. Your life may be on the line . . .

I was at the point where I dreaded nighttime. The hours leading up to bedtime were filled with anxiety and apprehension. Not only did I snore, but much to the horror of my husband, more recently he was **shaking me awake because he couldn't hear me breathing**.

I always knew that I snored because my husband told me this early on in our marriage. At first it was one of those 'quirks' you are supposed to accept and find endearing in your partner. It grew **increasing more aggravating and annoying** for him as the nights wore on.

I didn't realize how enormous an issue my snoring was. It kept my husband awake at night with common frequency. One night it became all too real an issue. On this particular night, he shook me awake. Because he was already up due to my snoring, he was staring at me in awe. Suddenly he realized, not only had I stopped snoring, but **I had stopped breathing** as well.



**The episode left both of us overwhelmed and frightened** – neither of us sure of what was going on. We calmed down and chalked it up to a bizarre occurrence and didn't give it much more thought until he realized it was happening hour after hour, night after night.

The experience left both of us overwhelmed and frightened – neither of us sure of what was going on. We calmed down, talked it over and chalked it up to a bizarre occurrence. We didn't give it much more thought until he saw it happening hour after hour, night after night.

When I woke each morning, I was exceptionally tired and lethargic. I always found myself anxious about the day ahead. I couldn't survive each day on the limited amount of sleep I was getting and my drowsiness just multiplied. **I was delirious from lack of sleep.**

I finally realized (after talking with friends and doing some research) that I was experiencing sleep apnea. **I was having these occurrences each night where I completely stopped breathing for short periods of time.** This was happening multiple times throughout the night – so not only was the quality of my sleep being jeopardized but my husband was also waking me several times throughout the night – because he was scared and unsure of what was going on. After my diagnosis and then my subsequent treatments, I was like an entirely new person. I finally slept soundly each night and my husband could relax and catch some zzz's himself, without the worry and concern over my sleep apnea.

Now, with the situation remedied, I can relax knowing **I have control over the situation – the situation doesn't control me.** Now we are all sleeping with better quality and quantity throughout the night.



### **Sleep Apnea:**

When your snoring is on-going and in addition, you find yourself gasping for air throughout the night that is sleep apnea. **A common - and often undiagnosed - disorder**, sleep apnea occurs when you have pauses (or apnea) in your breathing. These pauses can range from a few seconds to a couple minutes.

**Sleep apnea is a serious sleep disorder.** It occurs when your breathing essentially stops during your sleep. People with untreated sleep apnea stop breathing constantly throughout the night - **sometimes hundreds of times.**

## Symptoms of sleep apnea

Some common sleep apnea symptoms include:

- \* waking with a dry or sore throat
- \* Frequent silences during sleep
- \* Loud snoring
- \* On occasion, waking with a choking or gasping sensation
- \* finding yourself sleepy throughout the day
- \* waking with or developing a headache
- \* Mood changes
- \* Forgetfulness
- \* Re-occurring awakenings or bouts of insomnia



**There are many more symptoms linked to sleep apnea than just loud snoring** (although, this is often an initial indicator). Having one or two of the above symptoms doesn't necessarily mean you suffer from sleep apnea either. The only way to confidently determine if sleep apnea is affecting your life is to explain your symptoms to your dentist the next time you're scheduled for a visit. A trained health care provider can perform some simple tests to determine the severity of your affliction, if you are suffering.

## Can you have sleep apnea and not even know it?

YES!

**You may not even know you have a sleep disorder, much less sleep apnea.** Most times, if you suffer from sleep apnea, you don't recall waking during the night, although your sleep is disturbed and you shift from a deep level to a shallow level of sleep. This frequent awakening is slight and you eventually become accustomed to it. You are, however, disrupted enough that you get very little REM sleep and you wake feeling groggy and sleepy. **A huge percentage of people go through most of their lives unaware they suffer from sleep apnea.**

The same is true if you suffer from daytime sleepiness. Most of the time, **apnea victims aren't consciously aware that they feel tired or abnormally sleepy.** Because the disorder develops over a number of years, they don't notice the increasing number of symptoms. They believe they feel fine. It's so part of their everyday, they don't know any different. It's not until after treatment that they realize how much more energy they have to face each day.

You wake-up each morning and you feel dazed, un-rested and sluggish. You assume you just had another bad night's sleep. It's a **frustrating and tiring prospect to face another full day**, weary and exhausted. If you often times wake in the morning - if you are fortunate enough to make it until then – defeated and drained, **ask your partner if they noticed anything unusual in your sleep.** Frequently, it's **someone else who first recognizes problems** in your sleep patterns.

## Types of sleep apnea

Three different types of sleep apnea exist. They are: **obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), central sleep apnea and mixed sleep apnea.** While all three of these differ in their causes and possible treatment, they do share one common trait. A part of the respiratory system narrows which **limits the quantity of oxygen** a person takes into their lungs.

Because of the lowered blood oxygen levels, the brain is triggered to say “breathe again”. You then **'gasp' which sets in motion the breathing process** until the next cessation happens.

The most universal type of sleep apnea is **obstructive sleep apnea.** This happens when your upper airway is blocked during sleep. The blockage happens when the soft tissue in the **back of the throat collapses and closes** during sleep. Relaxed throat muscles, a narrow airway, a large tongue or extra fatty tissue in the throat can also block the airway. This blockage leads to shallow breathing or breathing pauses.



Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) predominantly affects men between the ages of 30 and 50 and takes place when the air passage becomes obstructed; preventing breathing, until low levels of oxygen in the blood causes a person to respond by waking and taking a **deep, snorting breath**.

**Central apnea** and **mixed apnea** fall into two additional categories of sleep apnea, however, they are considered less common.

**Central sleep apnea** is caused in an area of your brain which controls your breathing – not sending the correct signals to your breathing muscles. Those suffering from central sleep apnea go through a cycle involving rapid breathing, then the slowing of breathing followed by complete lack of breathing. Each cycle can last anywhere from 30 seconds to 2 minutes.

As the name suggests, **mixed apnea** is a combination of the other two apneas (obstructive and central). Some people experience long periods of obstructive sleep apnea interspersed with short episodes of central sleep apnea. This is called mixed sleep apnea.

### **Effects of Sleep Apnea. More than just the frustration of snoring.**

Obviously if there are huge disruptions in your sleep patterns, you will suffer the consequences. You will feel exhausted during the day. Your concentration and daytime performance will suffer drastically. **The costs of sleep apnea range from annoying to life-threatening.**

They include:

- \* Depression
- \* Irritability and aggressive behavior
- \* Memory difficulties
- \* Difficulty concentrating
- \* falling asleep at work or while driving



**Studies have shown sleep apnea is linked to high blood pressure**, an increased risk for **heart attack and stroke** and it has been implicated in sudden infant death syndrome.

The health problems connect to sleep apnea can have **monumental emotional fall-outs**. It can lead to loss of employment, marriage break-ups, and changes in your relationships with family and friends and has been linked to permanent memory loss and dementia.

## Insomnia:

### How to survive restless nights

#### Jill's Story:

Between being a mother, a wife, an associate partner along the countless boards I sat on, I had a lot on my mind. Working through the dilemmas, scenarios and schedules in my head quite often kept me up at night. It was a particularly hectic time of the year and I was juggling many tasks and commitments that had to be done. **My mind wouldn't turn off and I would spend those hours** planning meals for the upcoming week, determining who would chauffeur the kids from sports to music lessons and establish how I would handle the presentation at the morning meeting.

As is true in most situations, everything eventually fell into place and my worries began to fade. The great irony was now that I didn't have the mental pressures keeping me from sleep, I would still find myself awake most of the night, **staring at the ceiling and wondering why sleep wouldn't come.** I would rack my brain for any reasoning behind it; something that was subconsciously rousing me. Nothing would come to mind so I would close my eyes and 'will' myself to sleep. Still, hours would tick away on the bedside clock and I would be no where closer to dreamland as I was earlier.





**Frustration kicked in as I would get up and face the day groggy and frazzled.** Staring back at me in the mirror in the morning was shell of my former self – a baggy-eyed, puffy, haggard looking woman, expected to take on the challenges of the day. Night after night, day after day, this routine played out until it culminated to the point where I could no longer function in any meaningful way.

Finally, a diagnosis of insomnia was established and I began to re-build my life. **After my treatment**, I was able to sleep the recommended 8-hours each night and **I could operate in all my roles** as wife, mother, friend, daughter, sister colleague and chairperson.

### **Sleepless nights and even worse days**

We have all experienced sleepless nights on occasion. We are well aware of the outcome – particularly how it affects our quality of life. Especially the following day.

The most common sleep disorder reported by people is insomnia. If you have difficulty falling asleep and/or staying asleep and these symptoms **relentlessly endure day after week after month** - you may have chronic insomnia. Insomniacs have been known to sleep only minutes at a time. This, coupled with frequent waking at night, generates an **extremely exhausted and cranky individual**. You know how one bad night can take its toll on your body; just imagine how **consecutive sleepless nights start to wreak havoc on your physical and emotional being**.

### **I know I can't sleep but I don't know why. What exactly is insomnia?**

By simple definition, insomnia is “difficulty initiating or maintaining sleep”. It also takes into consideration the quality and quantity of your sleep. Individuals vary in their sleep requirements; therefore, insomnia is not defined by an exact number of hours that any one person sleeps.

Some people have trouble falling asleep. Some people fall asleep easily but can't stay asleep. Others still have issue with both falling and staying asleep. The common denominator is they all **wake up tired, grouchy and irritable** – because no one got enough rest.



## The effects of insomnia and how it interferes with your life.

Although insomnia is a common health problem, it can lead to devastating **consequences in your overall health and wellness**. Insomnia causes exhaustion and fatigue throughout your day and limits the energy you have to spend with family and friends. Long term insomnia leads to depression and irritability. You have trouble paying attention and lose your ability to learn and remember. **You don't live up to your full potential** at school, at work, with your friends and family.

**Stress, anxiety and depression** go hand-in-hand with insomnia. It not only affects your energy level and your mood, but it plays a significant role in the development of your immune system, your mental attentiveness and your overall concentration.

There are several 'classifications' of insomnia, ranging from mild to severe. These are dependent on how often and how long each 'episode' lasts. Chronic insomniacs generally have symptoms for a minimum of three nights per week and this lasts for more than a month. Less than that and the insomnia is known as short-term or acute insomnia.

### Signs of an insomniac

Unlike other sleep disorders, insomniacs *are* aware of their **disgruntled sleep patterns**. They don't need a bed partner to tell them something is going on. Because the primary symptom of insomnia is trouble falling and/or staying asleep, this leads to a **tired, cranky, miserable individual**.

Lack of sleep also leads to:

- \* waking tired and not fully rested
- \* Drowsiness and lack of concentration throughout the day
- \* Trouble focusing on tasks
- \* increase risk for accident
- \* Feelings of anxiousness, depression and irritation



Insomnia is not classified as a disease and most adults have experienced it at one time or another. Insomnia isn't a true diagnosis, but rather a **symptom of something larger** you may be going through. Chalking it up to restlessness or agitation you most likely didn't realize there are treatment options available. Seeking out medical advice could be the greatest gift you can give yourself.

