

You *Don't Snooze*, You Lose:

Sleep Apnea and Heart Disease

Do you snore so loudly that your spouse has difficulty sleeping?

Or do you get enough sleep, but feel tired all the time, dozing off in the middle of an office presentation or during your favorite television show at 9 p.m.?

If so, you may have sleep apnea, a common medical condition in which your breathing temporarily stops or becomes shallow during sleep.

Some people don't even realize that they have sleep apnea. Others feel that it is just something that they—and their partner—will have to tolerate.

But here is the catch: If left untreated, sleep apnea can cause serious health problems, including coronary artery disease, stroke, and hypertension.

Although the medical community initially recognized sleep apnea was linked to high blood pressure and heart disease, it was thought to be secondary to risk factors, such as diabetes and obesity.

“It wasn't until the late 80s that we realized sleep apnea was an independent risk factor for heart disease,” explains

Edward P. Schuman, M.D.,
medical director of the Holy
Redeemer's Sleep Disorders
Center.

Sleep Apnea and
Heart Disease with
Edward Schuman, M.D.
Tuesday, April 29.
See page 7 for details.



Understanding Sleep Apnea

If you have sleep apnea, your breathing typically pauses for more than 10 seconds at a time—more than 20 times an hour—while you sleep. Then, each time you return to normal breathing, you may make a loud snoring sound.

“Snoring that is regular with each breath is normal,” says Dr. Schuman. “However, snoring that has an irregular pattern and is interrupted by gasps and a few deep breaths, is problematic.” These interruptions, may be a strong indication that you have sleep apnea. “Partners should listen for, and be aware of, irregular snoring patterns,” Dr. Schuman says.

Risk factors for sleep apnea include excess body weight, especially in the shoulder and neck; a collar size of 17 or more; large tonsils; or a family history of the condition.

Diagnosis and Treatment

To accurately diagnose sleep apnea, a patient’s sleep patterns are recorded in overnight or daytime studies and analyzed using state-of-the-art technology. Since 1987, Holy Redeemer’s sleep team has offered advanced, comprehensive services and the most current diagnostic techniques currently available in the field of sleep medicine.

In addition to providing the latest diagnoses and treatment options, the Sleep Disorders Center team also emphasizes a relaxing, hotel-like atmosphere—complete with queen-sized beds—in the sleep lab.

“The overwhelming majority of staff members have been with us for many years, so we fully understand the compassionate care that is critical to successfully helping patients feel relaxed and comfortable during a sleep test,” says Louis J. Terzyk, RPSGT, Sleep Disorders Center Supervisor.

A New Lease on Life

If sleep apnea is diagnosed, treatments include CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure), which involves wearing a mask at night that blows air into the nose to keep it open; a custom-fit mouthpiece to advance the jaw and tongue and keep the airway open; or, surgical intervention.

If you have very mild sleep apnea, try avoiding alcoholic drinks at bedtime, losing weight, and sleeping on your side instead of your back.

But if you suffer from more severe sleep apnea, successful treatment can contribute to your heart health and make a huge difference in your daily life.

“Some people who think they have been functioning well are really amazed at how much better they feel after being treated for sleep apnea,” says Terzyk.



Risk factors for sleep apnea include excess body weight, especially in the shoulder and neck; a collar size of 17 or more; large tonsils; or a family history of the condition.

“Patients have said ‘You gave me my life back’ after they are able to sleep normally,” adds Dr. Schuman. “Sleep apnea is definitely a treatable condition, and treatment can help you and your heart stay healthy, but the biggest step is to first seek appropriate medical care.” •



For more information about Holy Redeemer’s Sleep Disorders Center, or to take the “What’s in Snore for You” quiz, visit heartatholyredeemer.com.

A Great Home Buying Opportunity is Emerging



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Holy Redeemer’s charming active adult community, construction has recently begun on 40 new condominiums in five elegant floor plans. Offering a wide range of designer colors, fixtures, and finishes, these homes offer maintenance-free living and plenty of clubhouse amenities, including a fitness center, pool, cafe, and spaces for social events. And, with a 10-year real estate tax abatement, this neighborhood is elegant and affordable.

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