

Transport Safety Pack

SLEEP APNOEA GUIDE

Sleep Apnoea is a condition which affects approximately 15% of adults and significantly increases your chance of heart attack and stroke.

It also leads to excessive daytime sleepiness, poor concentration and up to an eight times higher risk of having a road crash. The good news is that this condition is easily diagnosed and treated, with dramatic improvements to the sufferer's quality of life expected.

Most sufferers of Sleep Apnoea experience one or more of the following symptoms:

- ∞ Snoring
- ∞ Restless sleep
- ∞ Pauses in snoring and breathing lasting from 10 to 90 seconds while asleep
- ∞ Being constantly tired during the day
- ∞ Struggling to keep awake during the day.

Sleep Apnoea sufferers stop breathing repeatedly during their sleep and their blood oxygen levels fall to dangerously low levels. Generally the windpipe behind the tongue is either completely or partially obstructed (obstructive apnoea or hypopnoea).

Medical research has shown that Sleep Apnoea can contribute to:

- ∞ High blood pressure
- ∞ Heart disease
- ∞ Heart attack
- ∞ Stroke
- ∞ Fatigue
- ∞ Decrease in quality of life.

Long term effects can be:

- ∞ Failing short term memory and concentration
- ∞ Impotence
- ∞ Personality changes
- ∞ Depression.

What to do?

Patients whose doctors think they may have Obstructive Sleep Apnoea are often referred to a Sleep Disorders or Sleep Apnoea clinic for a full medical assessment which is covered by Medicare.

If Sleep Apnoea is confirmed, a range of treatment options may be suggested depending on the severity of the patient's condition. These include weight loss, avoidance of alcohol, and correction of nasal obstruction through surgery or the use of a nasal CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) device. CPAP is usually recommended in moderate to severe cases. It controls Sleep Apnoea by maintaining a slight positive airway pressure in the throat during sleep thereby preventing snoring and airway collapse. It is comfortable and provides immediate relief for most Obstructive Sleep Apnoea sufferers. It is only needed at night.

Sleep Disorder Clinics now operate in all states and the Northern Territory. Ask your doctor for a referral to your nearest clinic.

The Risk

Research shows that the chance of a work related accident due to Sleep Apnoea is greatly increased

- ∞ Sufferers have 3 times the risk of having a road crash.
- ∞ 24% of commercial drivers have excessive daytime sleepiness; 16% of these have obstructive sleep apnoea.

Further Information

- ∞ Visit HEATHBREAK – www.healthbreak.org, Tel 1300 727 614
- ∞ Visit www.vicroads.vic.gov.au and www.arrivealive.vic.gov.au

This safety guide has been produced by the Transport Industry Safety Group with the support of VicRoads to improve the safety of transport workers. It is one of 18 Safety Guides and other important information including the TISG's 'A Guide to Occupational Health and Safety Transport Industry' that can be downloaded from www.vta.com.au



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