



Bluewater Sleep Disorder Clinic

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Sleep apnea is considered a serious medical condition.

Complications may include:

- **Cardiovascular problems.**

Sudden drops in blood oxygen levels that occur during sleep apnea increase blood pressure and strain the cardiovascular system. If you have obstructive sleep apnea, your risk of high blood pressure (hypertension) can be up to two to three times greater than if you don't. The more severe your sleep apnea, the greater the risk of high blood pressure. If there's underlying heart disease, these multiple episodes of low blood oxygen (hypoxia or hypoxemia) can lead to sudden death from a cardiac event.

Obstructive sleep apnea also increases the risk of stroke, regardless of whether you have high blood pressure.

- **Daytime fatigue.**

The repeated awakenings associated with sleep apnea make normal, restorative sleep impossible. People with sleep apnea often experience severe daytime drowsiness, fatigue and irritability. You may have difficulty concentrating and find yourself falling asleep at work, while watching TV or even when driving. You may also feel irritable, moody or depressed. Children and adolescents with sleep apnea may do poorly in school or have behavior problems.

- **Complications with medications and surgery.**

Obstructive sleep apnea is also a concern with certain medications and general anesthesia. People with sleep apnea may be more likely to experience complications following major surgery because they're prone to breathing problems, especially when sedated and lying on their backs. Before you have surgery, tell your doctor that you have sleep apnea. Undiagnosed sleep apnea is especially risky in this situation.

- **Sleep-deprived partners.**

Loud snoring can keep those around you from getting good rest and eventually disrupt your relationships. It's not uncommon for a partner to go to another room, or even on another floor of the house, to be able to sleep. Many bed partners of people who snore are sleep deprived as well.

People with sleep apnea may also complain of memory problems, morning headaches, mood swings or feelings of depression, a need to urinate frequently at night (nocturia), and impotence. Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) may be more prevalent in people with sleep apnea. Children with untreated sleep apnea may be hyperactive and may be diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).