

## Sleep Apnea - Symptoms & Risk Factors

## **Symptoms**

The most common symptom of sleep apnea is snoring. However, not everyone who snores has sleep apnea. Snoring is likely to be a sign of sleep apnea when it is followed by silent breathing pauses and choking or gasping sounds.

People with sleep apnea often have daytime sleepiness or fatigue.

Common symptoms of sleep apnea include:

- Loud or frequent snoring
- Silent pauses in breathing
- Choking or gasping sounds
- Daytime sleepiness or fatigue
- Unrefreshing sleep
- Insomnia
- Morning headaches
- Nocturia (waking during the night to go to the bathroom)
- Difficulty concentrating
- Memory loss
- Decreased sexual desire
- Irritability

## **Risk Factors**

The major risk factor for sleep apnea is excess body weight. You are much more likely to have sleep apnea if you are overweight or obese. However, sleep apnea can occur in slim people too. Common risk factors for sleep apnea include:

• Excess weight – Your risk for sleep apnea is higher if you are overweight with a body mass index (BMI) of 25 or more or obese with a BMI of 30 or higher.

• Large neck size - Your risk for sleep apnea is higher if you have a neck size of 17 inches or more for men, or 16 inches or more for women. A large neck has more soft tissue that can block your airway during sleep.

• **Middle age** – Sleep apnea can occur at any age. However, it is more common between young adulthood and middle age.

• **Male gender** – Sleep apnea is more common in men than in women. For women the risk of sleep apnea increases with menopause.

• Hypertension – High blood pressure is extremely common in people who have sleep apnea.

• **Family history** – Sleep apnea is a heritable condition. This means that you have a higher risk of sleep apnea if a family member also has it. Inherited traits that increase the risk for sleep apnea include obesity and physical features such as a recessed jaw. Other common family factors - such as physical activity and eating habits - also may play a role.

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