

CottageHouseCall

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Sleep Medicine

Sleep Disorders have a daily impact on our lives and many common illnesses. Did you know that some states now charge criminal penalties for drowsy drivers who cause motor vehicle accidents where personal injuries occur? Falling asleep at the wheel can result in jail time.

Excessive daytime drowsiness can result from many sleep disorders. Sleep Apnea is certainly the most common affecting 2% of women and 4% of men in the United States.

People with Sleep Apnea snore and stop breathing (called apneas) multiple times during the night. They can have more than 50 apneas per hour! More than five apneas per hour is abnormal and more than 15 apneas per hour requires treatment with a machine which opens the airway with air pressure called a CPAP or Continuous Positive Air Pressure. People with Sleep Apnea wake up tired feeling like they didn't sleep. The lack of oxygen during the night can contribute to hypertension, risk of strokes, increased seizure activity and worsening control of diabetes. Risk factors for Sleep Apnea are increased neck size (greater than 17 inches in men and 15 inches in women) and being overweight.

The test for Sleep Apnea is called a Polysomnogram which is done overnight in the sleep laboratory and measures oxygen levels in the blood, breathing patterns and sleep stages, heart rhythms and body movements. A trained technician observes the study and can start CPAP during the study if the Sleep Apnea is obvious. Treating Sleep Apnea improves the quality of life, assists in treating other medical conditions and may save your drivers license.

The Polysomnogram is also essential when looking for other causes of excessive daytime sleepiness such as Narcolepsy, Idiopathic Hyper-somnolence (people who can't stay awake which is often hereditary) and seizure like disorders that aren't really seizures at all. Polysomnograms can explain REM-Sleep Behavior Disorder, where a person acts out their dreams and can injure themselves or their spouses, sometimes very seriously.

During Polysomnograms, other sleep disorders such as Periodic Leg Movements of Sleep, where people rhythmically kick during their sleep, can be identified as the cause of daytime sleepiness.

Find out more about sleep disorders from the AASM.com (American Association of Sleep Medicine website) your physician or the Cottage Hospital Sleep Laboratory, (309) 345-4371 or 345-4370.

*For more medical articles by local physicians visit our website at cottagehospital.com.
We hope this issue of CottageHouseCall has been helpful to you. Please call again.*