

HEART HEALTH

Severe Obstructive Sleep Apnea Can Be Life Threatening

(NAPSA)—Here's news many may find eye-opening: Untreated, severe obstructive sleep apnea more than doubles your risk of dying from heart disease, the National Healthy Sleep Awareness Project warns.

To raise awareness of this and to urge individuals with symptoms of sleep apnea to talk to a doctor about their risk, the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Sleep Research Society (SRS) and other partners created the "Sleep Apnea Hurts Hearts" campaign.

"Obstructive sleep apnea is a dangerous disease that can severely damage your heart if left untreated," said Dr. Ronald Chervin, president of the AASM. "With millions of sufferers remaining undiagnosed, it is critical to raise nationwide awareness about obstructive sleep apnea so that it can be treated with CPAP therapy, which can reduce the risk of cardiovascular death."

Nearly 30 million American adults are kept from restful sleep by obstructive sleep apnea, a chronic disease that involves the repeated collapse of the upper airway during sleep. According to the National Healthy Sleep Awareness Project, there are five key warning signs and risk factors for sleep apnea: snoring, choking or gasping during sleep; fatigue or daytime sleepiness; obesity (BMI of 30 or higher) and high blood pressure.

Severe Damage

Millions of people with sleep apnea remain untreated, which can lead to dangerous health consequences—including life-threatening effects on heart



It may come as a surprise to some but loud snoring can suggest that your heart is at risk. A certified sleep medicine physician can help.

health. The National Healthy Sleep Awareness Project warns that untreated, severe obstructive sleep apnea hurts HEARTS by increasing the risk of:

- H—Heart failure
- E—Elevated blood pressure
- A—Atrial fibrillation
- R—Resistant hypertension
- T—Type 2 diabetes
- S—Stroke.

"It is clear that untreated, severe obstructive sleep apnea may have a devastating impact on heart health," said Janet B. Croft, Ph.D., senior chronic disease epidemiologist in CDC's Division of Population Health. "Those who have symptoms of sleep apnea such as loud snoring in addition to obesity and a heart problem or high blood pressure should discuss their risk for sleep apnea with their doctor."

The American Heart Association (AHA) recently released a scientific statement on sleep duration and quality, which

stated that moderate and severe sleep apnea are associated with an elevated risk of cardiovascular disease. The authors of the AHA statement recommended that a public health campaign addressing sleep behavior should be launched to promote ideal cardiac health.

Damage Control

Fortunately, treatments for obstructive sleep apnea are available. Following diagnosis by a board-certified sleep medicine physician, the most commonly prescribed treatment for sleep apnea is continuous positive airway pressure therapy—or CPAP. This treatment uses mild levels of air pressure, provided through a mask, to keep the throat open while you sleep. According to a recent meta-analysis of 27 studies involving more than 3 million participants, the risk of cardiovascular mortality was reduced to normal levels in people with sleep apnea who were treated with CPAP therapy.

The National Healthy Sleep Awareness Project recommends that people who have been prescribed CPAP therapy for sleep apnea should use the treatment nightly to reduce their risk of cardiovascular death. Individuals who prefer a treatment alternative can discuss their treatment options with a board-certified sleep medicine physician at a sleep disorders center that is accredited by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine.

Learn More

To find an accredited sleep center nearby or to learn how you can guard your heart from sleep apnea to avoid being #Snoredto Death, visit www.projecthealthysleep.org.