

# Sleep Apnea

## USC Sleep Clinic

**What is it?** Sleep apnea (OSA) is a condition in which a person stops breathing repeatedly during sleep. The breathing pauses can occur for 10-20 seconds and can happen hundreds of times per night.

**What causes it?** In most patients, this occurs because your airways collapse and prevent air from getting into the lungs.

### What are the signs and symptoms of OSA?

- Gasping or choking during sleep
- Restless sleep
- Excessive sleepiness during the day
- Poor judgement or concentration
- Irritability
- Memory loss
- High blood pressure
- Depression
- Obesity
- Morning headaches
- Sexual dysfunction
- Snoring, interrupted by pauses in breathing

**How is it diagnosed?** You will have an overnight test where your heart, brain and oxygen are continuously monitored while you are sleeping. Most are done in "sleep labs", but certain patients may qualify to be tested at home.

**What is the treatment?** The most common treatment is CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure). Less common treatments include surgery and oral appliances, which may be effective for certain types of patients. Patients with OSA should try to lose weight, exercise and avoid alcohol.

**What could happen if I don't treat my sleep apnea?** You could have new onset or worsening of the following conditions:

- High blood pressure
- Irregular heart rhythms
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Heart attack
- Driving or work related accidents
- Decreased quality of life due to poor sleep quality

