

WHAT DOES SLEEP HAVE TO DO WITH THE HEART?

Sleep medicine is a relatively new field that gained increasing recognition for its act on heart health. As we learn more we are finding that problems with sleep can have severe effects on your cardiovascular system. Recent studies have shown that many sleep disorders may cause heart disease. The most widely-established involves a condition called Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA).

WHO IS AFFECTED BY SLEEP DISORDERS?

According to the National Sleep Foundation, sleep disorders affect 70 million Americans, (up to 1 in 5 adults). Not only have sleep disorders been recognized as a major cause of heart disease, they also cause considerable damage in the workplace and on the roadways. Sleepy drivers have been shown to be as dangerous as drunk drivers. On average, someone dies every six hours due to sleepy driving.

TREATING SLEEP DISORDERS IS GOOD FOR YOUR HEART, YOUR LIFE & YOUR FUTURE.

THE SLEEP LAB TEAM

at Seton Medical Center Harker Heights



KEVIN GALLAGHER, M.D.
Sleep Medicine



SAID SOUBRA, M.D.
Pulmonary Disease, Critical Care, and Sleep Medicine



HARSH BABBAR, M.D.
Pulmonary Disease, Critical Care, and Sleep Medicine



SHANTANU NAIK, M.D.
Pulmonary Disease, Critical Care, and Sleep Medicine

For physician scheduling, please call
(254) 680-6362.

The Sleep Lab is open from
6:30 p.m. - 6:00 a.m.

**Seton Medical Center
Harker Heights**
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850 W. Central Texas Expressway
Harker Heights, TX

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SLEEP DISORDERS &
CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH



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DISORDERS CAN LEAD TO: HYPERTENSION

Up to 80% of patients with uncontrolled high blood pressure have Sleep Disordered Breathing (SDB). National hypertension guidelines now recommend a sleep study for evaluation of patients who have severe or difficult-to-control high blood pressure. Studies have shown that in patients who have Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA), treatment can lower blood pressure by 10 or more points. In some cases, this can lead to fewer medications or stopping medications altogether.

CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE

Up to 50% of patients with congestive heart failure (CHF) suffer from SDB. Studies have shown that treating OSA in these patients may actually lead to significant improvements in heart strength. Effective therapy of OSA may also reduce the risk of death in patients who have CHF.

ATRIAL FIBRILLATION

Up to half of patients with atrial fibrillation (AF) also suffer from SDB. Recent studies have shown that untreated OSA is a major cause of new AF, as well as recurrent AF in patients who have previously been treated for it with cardioversion or ablation.

ATHEROSCLEROSIS

About one-third of patients with major blockages in their heart arteries have SDB. Clinical trials have shown that OSA can contribute to the development of dangerous plaque in the arteries and make you more likely to have obstructions that cause problems and require treatment.

Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) is the most common form of Sleep Disorder Breathing (SDB). It is frequently caused by a narrowing or collapse of throat tissue during sleep, causing blood oxygen levels to plummet. The body responds by sending out a flood of emergency hormonal signals which, over time, can take a toll on the heart and vascular system.

The good news is that once it is identified, SDB can be treated easily without medications or therapy. Treatment of OSA during sleep has been shown to produce lasting improvements in blood pressure, even during the waking hours.

SHOULD MY SLEEP BE EVALUATED?

The symptoms of sleep disorders may be obvious, like snoring or witnessed episodes of decreased breathing. But many patients have subtle symptoms, like daytime sleepiness and frequent napping. Like high blood pressure and plaque buildup, sleep disorders may be your "silent" killer.

The most accurate way to determine if you have a sleep disorder is to undergo an overnight sleep study in the Sleep Lab at Seton Medical Center Harker Heights. During this study, electrodes are placed over the heart and scalp to measure your heart and brain's function during sleep. Additional equipment is used to measure the depth and quality of your breathing throughout the night, as well as your oxygen levels and limb movements.

There are many treatment options available for those with sleep apnea. Treatment eliminates risks to your health and improves your quality of sleep and daytime energy levels. The most widely accepted treatment is the use of the Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) that is delivered through a mask you wear when sleeping. The mask provides an "air splint" to keep your breathing passages open throughout all stages of sleep. Modern CPAP units are quiet and portable, and new technologies have produced the most comfortable and least intrusive masks to date. For those patients who cannot tolerate CPAP, second line treatments are available including dental appliances and surgery.

A comprehensive sleep study should not only determine the pattern and quality of your sleep and breathing, but it should also involve continuous assessment of your heart and how it responds to different stages of sleep. Interpretation of these studies by a cardiologist who is an expert in sleep medicine allows for the greatest yield of information about the health of your sleep. Based on overwhelming data, it is clear that optimal heart care must include optimal sleep care. For this reason, Seton Medical Center Harker Heights has a unique cross-disciplinary Sleep Lab run by physicians who specialize in heart care, pulmonary disease, critical care and sleep medicine.

TREATED?

OSA is a risk factor for many types of heart disease. Studies have shown that treatment of OSA with CPAP can improve sleep and reduce or even eliminate this risk. Instead, emphasizing "diet and exercise," ideal heart care should emphasize "diet, exercise, and sleep." Treatment of sleep disorders may also improve your wakefulness during the day, overall productivity and improve alertness while driving.

If you suspect that a sleep problem is contributing to your heart disease, please ask your cardiologist about undergoing sleep evaluation.

