

YOU'VE STOPPED BREATHING IN YOUR SLEEP

By: Melissa Jeremiah, RN, CHCE

Director of Operations Hoosier Uplands Home Health & Hospice

Recently I have heard a lot of people talking about obstructive sleep apnea. Following is some information that I think may help people to understand obstructive sleep apnea.

What is obstructive sleep apnea:

The muscles in the back of your throat relax, which narrows your airway and causes you to not get enough breath in. This may lower your oxygen level, which causes your brain to rouse you from sleep so you can reopen your airway.

There have been links between obstructive sleep apnea and heart attacks that occur between 12 a.m. and 6 a.m., when the person is normally asleep. Heart attacks most frequently occur between 6 a.m. and noon in the general public.

What are the factors that increase your risk of developing obstructive sleep apnea:

Being overweight, African American, thick neck circumference, a narrowed airway, being male, being over age 60, family history, smoking, nasal congestion and the use of alcohol, sedatives or tranquilizers.

Symptoms of sleep apnea are:

Frequent daytime sleepiness although you think you slept well, loud snoring, abrupt awakenings accompanied by shortness of breath, awakening with a dry mouth or sore throat, a headache in the mornings, insomnia and difficulty concentrating.

Talk to your health care professional if you suffer from these symptoms.

Research for this article was obtained from the Mayo Clinic. Their website can be viewed at www.mayoclinic.com.