

Health and wellbeing fact sheet

Obstructive Sleep Apnoea (OSA)

Do you continually feel tired at times during the day? Have difficulty concentrating or struggling to accomplish many everyday tasks? Do you feel sleepy or even find yourself falling asleep while driving, at work or during a conversation? If so, you may be one of the many people who suffer from **Obstructive Sleep Apnoea**.

What is OSA? OSA is a respiratory condition in which the throat repeatedly narrows or closes during sleep and repeatedly interrupts a person's breathing. Air is blocked from getting into the lungs, and low oxygen levels cause the brain to wake the person up. OSA becomes more likely as people get older and is more common in men than women. Many of us are unaware we have it. Being overweight, smoking and drinking more than the safe recommended amounts of alcohol increases the risks.

Symptoms: If you have OSA, your partner may notice periods when you stop breathing while you are asleep, accompanied by gasping and snorting as an episode of apnoea occurs and that you snore heavily. On waking you may have a dry mouth and a headache, while during the day you feel excessively tired and irritable, and over time start feeling depressed.

Severe OSA increases the risk of a person suffering high blood pressure, heart attack or stroke. It's also associated with an increased risk of accidents at work and on the road, due to excessive tiredness. Some people with OSA notice that they get up to the toilet frequently during the night. OSA can range from being very mild to severe, but can be diagnosed and treated. If concerned, please contact your General Practitioner.

Treatments: Treatments are available, ranging from simple dental splints, to more complex nasal continuous positive airways pressure (CPAP) through a mask worn over the nose providing air pressure to help keep the airways open during sleep. Medication is sometimes recommended in severe cases. If you're snoring and OSA is not severe here are some suggested lifestyle changes that you can make that may help:

- Losing some weight if you are overweight or obese.
- Not drinking alcohol for 4-6 hours before going to bed and keeping to the recommended safe limits.
- Not using sedative drugs.
- Stopping smoking if you are a smoker.
- Sleeping on your side or in a semi-propped position

If you are concerned that OSA may be affecting you at work please notify your line manager who can refer you to BUPA our occupational health provider. Further help and information is available from <http://www.sleep-apnoea-are> , www.lunguk.org and www.britishsnoring.co.uk
