

# Always Sleepy?

Do you continually feel tired at times during the day? Do you find it difficult to concentrate or struggle to accomplish many everyday tasks? Do you feel sleepy or even find yourself falling asleep while driving or during a conversation? If so you may be one of the many people who suffer from Sleep Apnoea.

## About Sleep Apnoea

Sleep Apnoea is due to the obstruction of the upper airway, caused by the throat muscles relaxing during sleep. The airway may become partially blocked or collapse completely, causing pauses or breaks in breathing, preventing air from entering the lungs and forcing the person to wake briefly to breathe before falling back to sleep again. The period of wakefulness is so brief that even though it may happen hundreds of times a night, the person usually won't remember waking up, however, sleep will have been greatly disturbed.

As a result, people with Sleep Apnoea suffer excessive sleepiness during the day, often blaming their work-load or age, but potentially leading to dangerously reduced levels of concentration, changes in mood and personality and a general reduction in quality of life.

In tests of simulated driving, Sleep Apnoea patients had worse driving performance than drivers over the alcohol limit.

## Key Facts

- Sleep Apnoea has been reported to affect as many as one in 25 middle-aged men and one in 50 middle-aged women in the UK.
- Only about one in four people with Sleep Apnoea have been diagnosed.
- In tests of simulated driving, Sleep Apnoea patients had worse driving performance than drivers over the alcohol limit.
- Two studies identified an 83% reduction in road traffic accidents when patients were on CPAP treatment.

## Treatment

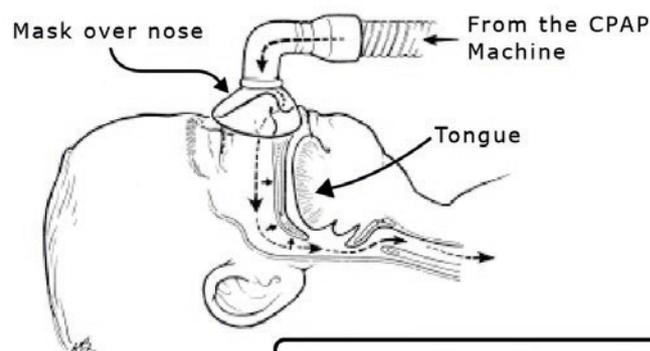
In March 2008, the Government announced that Continuous Positive Airways Pressure (CPAP) machines – the most effective treatment for Sleep Apnoea – will now be freely available on the NHS.

CPAP involves a person wearing a soft mask over the nose attached to a machine that raises and regulates the pressure of the air they breathe, preventing the airway from collapsing during sleep.

Most people who use CPAP have an immediate improvement in their sleep, and it has been clinically proven to restore daytime alertness.

## Key Fact

- 80% of people who should be receiving CPAP to treat their Sleep Apnoea are either undiagnosed or have not had the treatment provided.



Arrows indicate flow of air which maintains the patency of airway behind the tongue

## Diagnosis

If you think you may have Sleep Apnoea, try completing this questionnaire below.

How likely are you to doze off or fall asleep in the following situations, in contrast to just feeling tired? This refers to your usual way of life in the last few weeks. Even if you have not done some of these things recently, try to work out how they would have affected you. Use the following scale to choose the most appropriate number for each situation. Please tick one box on each line.

- 0 = Would never doze
- 1 = Slight chance of dozing
- 2 = Moderate chance of dozing
- 3 = High chance of dozing

“(Since starting CPAP) I’ve lost two stone in weight as I now have energy again. The dog now gives me looks such as “oh no, do I have to go for another walk again!” **Steve**

“My husband now sleeps well at night and can once again lead a normal life - CPAP has given both of us our lives back.” **Annette**

Situation	0	1	2	3
Sitting and reading				
Watching television				
Sitting inactive in a public place (e.g. a theatre or a meeting)				
As a passenger in a car for an hour without a break				
Lying down in the afternoon, when circumstances permit				
Sitting and talking to someone				
Sitting quietly after lunch (without alcohol)				
In a car, while stopped for a few minutes in traffic				

If by answering these questions, you score over ten, you may have a sleep disorder and should consult your GP. It is important to take this completed questionnaire with you to your GP and to tell them that you suspect you might have Sleep Apnoea at the consultation and ask for an Oxygenation test or a Sleep test.

## A word of warning

Please note there are a number of devices on the market that claim to treat Sleep Apnoea. However, many of them, with the exception of CPAP, are not clinically proven. If you suffer from excessive sleepiness please consult your GP before needlessly purchasing anything.

“After only 4 hours sleep with my CPAP machine, I felt as if a further  $\frac{3}{4}$  of my brain had just been switched on.” **Steve**

“I can’t believe how much more energy and concentration I have, coupled with feeling - 100 times better in myself and more cheerful - I had forgotten how depressed I used to feel because I was so tired.” **Angie**

“One month after using the CPAP machine I found myself driving from my hometown of Aylesbury, to the top of North Yorkshire without feeling any effects of tiredness or fatigue.” **Ray**

“The improvement in my condition after my first night on CPAP was mind-blowing - the sun shone more brightly and the birds sang more sweetly than at any other time.” **Steve**

This information sheet has been co-authored by The British Thoracic Society and The Sleep Apnoea Trust Association.



THE BRITISH  
THORACIC SOCIETY



The Sleep Apnoea Trust  
Association

Working to improve the lives of sleep apnoea patients,  
their partners and their families