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**SLEEP DOES AFFECT ASTHMA AND ALLERGIES: ARE YOU GETTING ENOUGH?**

\* Adults need 7-8 hours of sleep every night and school-age kids require 10-11 hours a night according to the National Sleep Foundation. **Adequate sleep helps keep the body healthy** by allowing some of the body's systems – circulatory, respiratory, digestive, immune, muscular, skeletal and nervous symptoms – to have the quiet time required to recharge, repair and heal. For children, sleep is a physical, mental and emotional growth period yet studies show most adults and too many children aren't getting the sleep required by nature, leaving our bodies deprived and vulnerable to illnesses including heart, digestive and respiratory diseases and other complications.

\* If you have **asthma or allergies, restful and adequate sleep allows our bodies to combat the symptoms of these diseases and helps prevent infections** which make these diseases worse. What **causes us to be sleep deprived?**

\* Often our bedroom lacks the right environment. A bedroom isn't an annex to a family or living room. In today's plugged-in world, **electronic distractions cut sleep time**. Bedrooms should be peaceful havens dedicated to sleep, not watching TV, working on the computer or playing video games. Remove these distractions if you want to sleep better.

\* Sometimes distractions are **outside**. Inconsiderate and loud neighbors or traffic noise can leave you tossing and turning. If installing double-paned glass windows isn't an option, a "white noise" machine helps mask noise for most people.

\* **Pets** can help keep you sleep deprived if they sleep in your bedroom, or worse, on your bed, especially if you have a dander allergy. Put a comfortable bed for your pet outside the bedroom and shut your door at night.

\* A partner who snores can interfere with quality sleep, and if they snore loud enough they can keep the whole house from getting rest. There are many causes of **snoring** and one cause is **sleep apnea**. A recent study said women with asthma are twice as likely to have sleep apnea. This Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center study said **21% of young women with asthma snored all the time** which is a **symptom of sleep apnea**. *Air It Out* asked **Dr. David Ostransky, DO**, Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine specialist of the North TX Lung & Sleep Center, Ft. Worth, 76109 (817-731-0230) to clarify some questions about sleep apnea.

\* **AIO:** Dr. Ostransky, what exactly is sleep apnea?

\* **Dr. Ostransky:** Obstructive sleep apnea is a fairly common **sleep disorder** or syndrome that happens when part or all of the upper airways in our nasal passages collapse. This causes loud snoring, interrupted breathing during sleep and restless sleep leading to daytime tiredness. It can also cause a need for frequent nighttime urination (which means more interrupted sleep), morning headaches and depression. Sleep apnea can result in mental confusion during the day, poor work and school performance and can lead to high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes.

\* **AIO:** Are adults the only ones affected by sleep apnea?

\* **Dr. Ostransky:** No, it affects all ages, sexes and races. Approximately 3 to 7% of adult men and 2 to 5% of adult women have sleep apnea, but 70 to 80% of these are undiagnosed. Generally though, it does affect more men, or people who are obese or badly overweight, women who are post-menopausal and people who have a family history of the disorder. People with certain medical conditions like high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, congestive heart failure, diabetes, stroke, hypothyroidism and polycystic ovarian syndrome have a higher likelihood to have the syndrome, too.

\* **AIO:** Does sleep apnea have any direct connection to asthma or allergies?

\* **Dr. Ostransky:** No, there's **no direct relationship between sleep apnea and allergies**, in other words, allergies won't cause this disorder and sleep apnea won't cause allergies. But, if a person has allergies, specifically **allergic rhinitis**, that **may** cause or make **snoring worse**. Often it's **hard to distinguish between nighttime asthma symptoms and apneas**.

\* **AIO:** Can sleep apnea be dangerous for those who have it?

\* **Dr. Ostransky:** Yes, it could be dangerous in many ways. Besides the health effects mentioned earlier, sleep apnea causes sleep deprivation leading to excessive daytime sleepiness and fatigue. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that drowsy driving causes at least 100,000 crashes and kills more than 1,550 Americans each year. If **untreated**, sleep apnea patients have **seven times the risk of a serious driving accident**.

\* **AIO:** How does someone know if they have sleep apnea and how is it treated when diagnosed?

\* **Dr. Ostransky:** We **diagnose** the syndrome by using an overnight **polysomnogram**, a sleep study which records many physical signals during sleep including brain waves, eye movements, muscle tone, airflow, heart rate, oxygen level, chest, stomach and leg movement. The more breathing pauses per hour, the worse the apnea. Treatment options vary including a diet for weight loss, CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure, a mask that fits over the nose and is connected to an air pump which prevents the upper airway from collapsing), surgery, or a dental appliance. Your sleep doctor will help you decide the most appropriate treatment option.

\* For more hints on getting restful sleep, contact [info@aafatexas.org](mailto:info@aafatexas.org) Take control of your asthma and allergies!

**Upcoming AAFA-TX programs:** **1) Sept. 2, 7-9 pm** Food Allergy Support Group open meeting, Montgomery County south Regional Library, 2101 Lake Robbins Dr. The Woodlands 77380. For more information contact [dorin@saferhouston.com](mailto:dorin@saferhouston.com) **2) Oct. 3**, "Asthma Management & Education" a continuing ed. program worth 3 contact hours for nurses & 2 CRCE for Respiratory Therapists, Oklahoma City, OK **3) Oct. 4**, "Asthma & Allergy Essentials for Childcare Providers" First Baptist Church of Melissa, Mudpies & Lullabies sponsor, Melissa, TX, Darla Theis, instructor **4) October 10** "Asthma & Allergy Essentials for Childcare Providers" Holy Family of Nazareth, Irving, Patty Carlton, instructor. Pre-registration required for all programs. Contact [info@aafatexas.org](mailto:info@aafatexas.org) for more information.

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