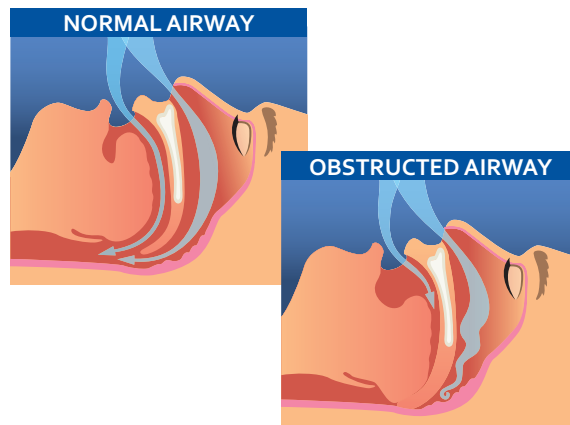


PATIENT EDUCATION | **INFORMATION SERIES**

Sleep Problems in Asthma and COPD

Good quality sleep is important for everyone. People with asthma and/or Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) may have sleep issues that can lead to nighttime awakenings and daytime sleepiness. This may worsen their symptoms of asthma or COPD. There are a number of steps people with asthma and/or COPD can take to improve their sleep.



What kind of night disturbances can I get with asthma and/or COPD?

Waking up at night, also called nighttime arousals or nighttime awakenings, can happen if you have asthma or COPD. These arousals interrupt your sleep and may result in feeling groggy in the morning and/or tired during the day. Symptoms of COPD and asthma that may cause you to wake up at night include coughing, wheezing, breathlessness, nasal congestion and heartburn. People with COPD and/or asthma may also be at increased risk for obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) and may awaken from symptoms of this sleep problem.

What is sleep apnea and why can I get sleep apnea with asthma and/or COPD?

Sleep apnea is a condition that causes you to snore and have periods when you stop breathing during sleep. These pauses in breathing usually last 10 seconds or longer. (See ATS fact sheet on OSA in Adults.) It is not clear why sleep apnea may occur more often in people with asthma and/or COPD, but you are more at risk if you have severe asthma, are overweight, have nasal congestion,

acid reflux and/or use high doses of inhaled corticosteroids.

How do sleep problems affect my asthma and/or COPD?

People with asthma and/or COPD who have a frequent problem waking up at night often have worse respiratory disease. They are also at risk for complications from their asthma or COPD. Sleep apnea can worsen asthma symptoms throughout the day, increase your need for rescue inhalers, and worsen your quality of life. If you have COPD, the pauses in your breathing and low oxygen levels with sleep apnea can make your COPD worse, increase your risk for exacerbations, and reduce your survival. Sleep apnea can be a serious condition by itself. People who have moderate to severe sleep apnea that is not treated are at higher risk for hypertension, heart disease, and stroke (See ATS fact sheet on OSA and Heart Disease).

What can I do to help myself sleep better?

The first step is to make sure that your asthma and/or COPD is under good control. Talk to your healthcare provider to review your disease control, see that you are getting

the right medical treatment, and make a plan of things you can do to control your asthma/COPD. Your healthcare provider will instruct you when to use your rescue inhaler (such as albuterol or levalbuterol) and how to use breathing techniques like pursed lip breathing should you experience any sudden breathlessness. Also, talk to your healthcare provider if you have problems with regular nasal congestion or heartburn, to get them under better control. If you smoke, quitting smoking will not only help your asthma or COPD control, but also improve the quality of your sleep.

Tell your health care provider if you think you may have sleep apnea so that you can be evaluated. Sleep apnea is a treatable condition!

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Rx Action Steps

If you have asthma and/or COPD, you may be at increased risk for sleep problems. Talk to your healthcare provider if you:

- ✓ Have more frequent asthma/ COPD symptoms and are not sleeping well.
- ✓ Have conditions that can make sleeping and disease control worse such as being overweight, nasal congestion, or regular heartburn.
- ✓ Are sleepy during the day, even after you have slept all night.
- ✓ Snore, make choking noises, or have breathing pauses during sleep, as you may have obstructive sleep apnea.
- ✓ Wake up in the morning with headaches.
- ✓ If you smoke, quit.
- ✓ Follow good sleep practices.
- ✓ Work with your healthcare team to keep your lung disease in good control.

Healthcare Provider's Contact Number:

Resources:

American Thoracic Society (ATS)

- <http://www.thoracic.org/patients/>
 - Obstructive Sleep Apnea in Adults
 - Obstructive Sleep Apnea and Heart Disease
 - CPAP Therapy
 - Healthy Sleep in Adults

Sleep Foundation

- <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/article/sleep-related-problems/chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease-and-sleep>
- <https://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-disorders-problems/asthma-and-sleep>

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