

Sleep Apnea: More than a Snore

OSF HealthCare Newsroom

Matt Sheehan – Media Relations Coordinator

PRINT SCRIPT

Nearly 30 million adults in the United States are affected by obstructive sleep apnea and almost 80% of these cases are undiagnosed, according to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM).

The AASM has launched an awareness campaign for this condition, which costs more than \$149 billion annually in health care costs, lost work productivity and workplace and motor vehicle accidents.

Juanbosco Ayala, MD, is a pulmonologist with OSF HealthCare. He says the most common sign of sleep apnea is an overall tiredness throughout the day.

“Patients feel very tired and don’t feel energized after waking up in the morning,” Dr. Ayala says. “They may have morning headaches, a dry mouth, and they may be told by their significant other that they snore or stop breathing in the middle of the night.”

Another common sign? Dozing off during the day.

“Whether it’s talking like we are, in a meeting, or watching a movie. It’s this excessive tiredness that leads to falling asleep quite easily. There are even patients who will fall asleep while driving. They get to a stop sign and for those two seconds they’re not paying attention, they’ll doze off,” Dr. Ayala says.

The most common treatment of sleep apnea, Dr. Ayala says, is the C-PAP machine.

“There’s a full face mask that encompasses a mask over the nose and mouth. There are patients that do well with just a nasal mask,” Dr. Ayala says.

As recently reported by doctors at OSF HealthCare, bad sleeping habits can have long-term consequences to our lives. Dr. Ayala says the same goes for sleep apnea.

“Long-term consequences typically involve either the heart or the lungs. Specifically long-standing hypertension and an entity called pulmonary hypertension can be something we see long-term from untreated sleep apnea,” Dr. Ayala says. “There’s also a significant risk for heart attacks and strokes.”

Dr. Ayala says some data suggests sleep apnea could also lead to cognitive impairment. He says sleep apnea is normally seen in overweight patients, but can be found in almost anyone.

“There is a subset of the population that is fit, not necessarily overweight, and they have sleep apnea,” Dr. Ayala says. “Sometimes not thinking about it leads to impediments in treatment.”

Dr. Ayala says the best thing you can do if you suspect you have sleep apnea is to see a health care provider. An OSF HealthCare provider can evaluate you and create a treatment plan moving forward.