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Stop the Snore: Sleep Apnea Action Urgent for Those at Risk

Life-Threatening Sleep Illness Afflicts at Least 25 Million Americans – and Counting

(Darien, Ill.) August 12, 2014 – The nation’s sleep experts agree: obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) – a potentially life-threatening disease involving episodes of complete or partial airway obstruction during sleep – is dangerously on the rise. The National Healthy Sleep Awareness Project, a collaboration launched this year by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Sleep Research Society (SRS), is urging anyone with symptoms of OSA to [pledge to stop the snore](#) and talk to a doctor about sleep apnea.

“Research shows that the number of sleep apnea sufferers continues to increase – the disease afflicts at least 25 million American adults, and most of them remain untreated, increasing their risk of cardiac disease, hypertension, Type 2 diabetes and obesity,” said Dr. Timothy Morgenthaler, president of the AASM and a national spokesperson for the Healthy Sleep Project. “Fortunately, many of the damaging effects of sleep apnea can be stopped, and even reversed, through diagnosis and treatment by a board-certified sleep specialist.”

How do you know if you should talk to a doctor about OSA? According to the Healthy Sleep Project, here are five warning signs for sleep apnea:

- **Snoring.** Besides being a nuisance to your bed partner or roommate, loud and frequent snoring is a common symptom of sleep apnea. While not everyone who snores has this sleep illness, snoring is a warning sign that should be taken seriously.
- **Choking or gasping during sleep.** When snoring is paired with choking, gasping or silent breathing pauses during sleep, it’s a strong indicator of sleep apnea.
- **Fatigue or daytime sleepiness.** “Sleep apnea can leave you waking in the morning feeling tired, even after a full night’s sleep,” said Morgenthaler. “Excessive daytime sleepiness often occurs because sleep apnea causes numerous arousals throughout the night, and your body isn’t getting the quality sleep it needs.”
- **Obesity.** An adult with a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or higher is considered to be obese, and the risk of sleep apnea increases with the amount of excess body weight.
- **High blood pressure.** A staggering 67 million Americans have high blood pressure, which is about one in every three adults. Between 30 and 40 percent of adults with high blood pressure also have sleep apnea, and getting treatment for sleep apnea is a proven means of decreasing blood pressure.

If these symptoms describe you, then you have a high risk for OSA. If you're ready to talk to a doctor about sleep apnea, the Healthy Sleep Project encourages you to visit stopsnoringpledge.org to pledge to stop the snore and find a local sleep specialist at an AASM-accredited sleep center.

"A common misconception is that sleep apnea only affects older, overweight men," said Morgenthaler. "This widely-held assumption is wrong: anyone can have sleep apnea, regardless of gender, age or body type – even if you're not overweight."

Your doctor may decide you need an objective sleep test, which will provide the data needed to make an accurate diagnosis. Once diagnosed, the most commonly recommended treatment for sleep apnea is continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) therapy, which provides gently pressurized air through a mask, keeping your airway open and making it easier to breathe. For patients who are unable to tolerate CPAP, or who seek alternatives, knowledgeable sleep specialists may be able to offer other treatments.

"Obstructive sleep apnea is a chronic disease that has a negative impact on the health and well-being of millions of people in the U.S.," said Janet B. Croft, PhD, senior chronic disease epidemiologist in CDC's Division of Population Health. "It is important to discuss the warning signs for sleep apnea with your doctor to determine if you are at risk."

For more information or to pledge to stop the snore and talk to a doctor about sleep apnea, visit projecthealthysleep.org.

About the National Healthy Sleep Awareness Project

The National Healthy Sleep Awareness Project was initiated in 2013 through a cooperative agreement between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. The ongoing project involves a partnership between the AASM, CDC, Sleep Research Society and other collaborators to promote the importance of healthy sleep.

The Healthy Sleep Project addresses the sleep health focus area of Healthy People 2020, which provides science-based, 10-year national objectives for improving the health of all Americans. The sleep health objectives are to increase the medical evaluation of people with symptoms of obstructive sleep apnea, reduce vehicular crashes due to drowsy driving and ensure more Americans get sufficient sleep. For more information, visit www.sleepeducation.org/healthysleep.

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