

# The basics of sleep apnea

Sleep apnea is a condition where breathing stops and starts during sleep. It can lower your oxygen levels and put stress on your heart, kidney, brain, and other organs, which can increase the risk of serious health problems if left untreated.

## What happens during sleep apnea?

If you have sleep apnea, pauses in your breathing can happen many times each night. When your breathing stops, your oxygen levels drop, and your body wakes up briefly to start breathing again. Most people do not remember waking during the night.

## How are sleep apnea and kidney disease connected?

Sleep apnea and kidney disease are closely connected. Repeated drops in oxygen during sleep can raise your blood pressure and strain your heart and kidneys, which may worsen kidney function over time. Treating sleep apnea can improve sleep quality and may help protect kidney health.

## What are the types of sleep apnea?

There are two main types of sleep apnea:

- **Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA)**

This is the most common type of sleep apnea. It happens when the muscles in the throat relax too much during sleep, causing the airway to become partially or fully blocked. When this happens, breathing slows or stops for short periods.

- **Central sleep apnea**

This type occurs when the brain does not send consistent signals to the muscles that control breathing. Unlike OSA, the airway stays open, but breathing still pauses.

## What are the symptoms?

Common symptoms of sleep apnea include:

- Loud snoring
- Pauses in breathing during sleep
- Waking up gasping or choking
- Feeling very tired during the day
- Morning headaches
- Trouble focusing or remembering things
- Poor sleep quality

Some people may not realize they have sleep apnea until a partner notices symptoms.

### How is sleep apnea diagnosed?

Sleep apnea is usually diagnosed with a sleep study. This test may be done in a sleep lab, or at home using a special monitoring device. The sleep study checks your breathing, oxygen levels, heart rate, and sleep patterns.

### How is sleep apnea treated?

Treating sleep apnea can help improve sleep and energy levels and support heart and kidney health. The treatment options depend on the type and severity of sleep apnea, and may include:

- CPAP therapy, a machine that keeps the airway open during sleep
- A minimally invasive outpatient surgical procedure, called Inspire
- Wearing a mouth device to support breathing
- Lifestyle changes like weight management, avoiding alcohol, and adding physical activity
- Changing sleep positions
- Treating related conditions like high blood pressure or fluid buildup



#### We are here to help

Your care team can help answer your questions about sleep apnea. Reach out for any support you need.