

Diagnosis and Treatment Fact Sheet

The Center for Sleep Medicine at Englewood Hospital and Medical Center offers a comprehensive, state-of-the-art diagnostic program to identify sleep disorders. It also offers a variety of non-invasive, non-stressful treatments, which allow patients to return to restful sleep patterns.

In Addition to sleep apnea (described below), the Center for Sleep Medicine diagnoses and treats a variety of conditions which may interfere with restful sleep patterns. These conditions include:

- **Periodic Limb Movement Syndrome:** This disorder, which often coexists with sleep apnea, causes people to repeatedly awaken to involuntary thrashing movements, most typically of the legs. The Center can record a patient's leg muscle movement to diagnose this disorder.
- **Narcolepsy:** Less common than sleep apnea, narcolepsy is a genetic sleep disorder that causes excessive daytime sleepiness that can seriously interfere with a person's ability to function properly. The Sleep Disorder Center tests for this condition using a Multiple Sleep Latency Test (MSLT). This test can objectively measure excessive daytime sleepiness to make a definitive diagnosis.
- **Insomnia:** Often resulting from anxiety or stress, insomnia may occasionally reflect a sleep disorder. The Center can perform tests to determine if the cause is insomnia

Diagnosis

Our Center for Sleep Medicine specializes in the treatment of sleep apnea, the most common sleep disorder, affecting more than 20 million Americans. Sleep apnea is a condition in which a person actually stops breathing due to an intermittent blockage in the windpipe. The breathing obstruction forces the oxygen-deprived person to repeatedly awaken with a cough or gasp to reopen the airway. This disruptive cycle repeats hundreds of times each night, causing the person to experience progressively disturbed, restless sleep.

Symptoms of the disorder include loud, habitual snoring, extreme daytime sleepiness, and has other medical consequences such as depression, mood change, memory loss, weight gain, impotency and headaches.

Associated risks also include heart attacks, stroke, hypertension, irregular heart rhythms, heart failure, and sudden death. Proper treatment can improve cardiovascular outcomes.

To diagnose this condition, The Center offers a highly-specialized test called a Nocturnal Polysomnogram (NPSG), which evaluates a patients sleep patterns during an overnight stay. To perform this non-invasive test, a skilled Sleep Center technician positions small sensors at various points on the body to continuously measure and record brain waves, heart rhythms, muscle activity, breathing patterns, and leg, arm and eye movements during sleep.

This test provides highly-reliable information on excessive snoring, daytime sleepiness, unexplained headaches and severe nasal obstructions.

Once the test is complete, a pulmonologist, with a specialty in sleep disorders, interprets the results, confirms a diagnosis and works with the patient's physician to develop a treatment plan.

Additional tests offered at The Center include measuring the patient's respiratory effort; recording body positioning during sleep, which provides valuable information regarding nocturnal breathing patterns; and recording leg muscle movement to diagnose leg movement disorders.

Treatment

If a diagnosis for sleep apnea is made, a course of treatment will be prescribed. The goal is to keep the patient's airway open so that normal breathing can be maintained throughout the night. Depending on the patient's condition and preference, this can be accomplished a number of different ways.

One of the most effective treatments available through The Center is Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP), a non-invasive, comfortable therapy that can provide immediate relief. Patients wear a mask over their nose during sleep. Gentle pressure from an air compressor forces air through the nasal passages and into the airway, holding it open so the person can sleep and breathe normally during sleep.

Other treatment can include medication, such as certain decongestants; permanent weight loss when weight is a contributing factor; or, in extreme cases, surgery.

Tips

General guidelines that can assist patients who suffer from sleep disturbances:

- Losing weight often improves breathing during sleep, enabling the patient to sleep more restfully with less likelihood for daytime sleepiness.
- Avoiding alcohol within two hours of bedtime. Alcohol depresses breathing and increases the risk for sleep disturbances.
- Avoiding sleeping pills, which depress breathing.
- Sleeping on one's side, not on the back.

For more information, call the Center for Sleep Medicine at 201-894-3154.