

# Sleep Apnea and Asthma – Are they Connected?

Sleep Apnea  
and  
Asthma



Asthma and sleep apnea are two of the most prevalent respiratory disease in recent times. They share aggravating factors like obesity, systemic inflammation, and sinonasal disease. The overlapping similarities are glaring, so the question of whether or not they are connected is frequently asked.

We will examine the relationship between sleep apnea and asthma in this article, and find out if they are connected.

## What is Sleep Apnea?

Sleep apnea is a disorder caused by frequent closing of the upper airways in the body. This condition leads to a reduced airflow to the lungs, low levels of oxygen in the blood and gasping episodes. The three main types of sleep apnea are;

- **Obstructive sleep apnea:** This is caused by partially or

entirely blocked airways.

- **Central sleep apnea:** The condition occurs when signals that control breathing are not sent from the brain.
- **Complex sleep apnea:** This type is a combination of both central and obstructive sleep apnea.

## **Symptoms of Sleep Apnea**

The common symptoms of sleep apnea are;

- Loudly snoring
- Episodes of choking, gasping, coughing and gagging during sleep
- Morning headaches and restlessness
- Insomnia and forgetfulness
- Daytime fatigue

## **What is Asthma?**

Asthma is a disease of the lungs. The airways of asthmatic people become narrow, swell, and produce mucus. Asthma is common in children and can make many activities difficult to perform.

## **How obstructive sleep apnea affects asthma**

Since the 1980s, millions of Americans have been affected by asthma and sleep apnea, and nocturnal asthma is worsened by acid reflux. Sleep apnea, in turn, causes or worsens acid flux by rendering the sphincter muscles unable to keep most of the stomach's acid.

Sleep apnea causes an increase in the chemicals in the bloodstream and an inflammation of the lungs. These chemicals worsen asthma and contribute to obesity and weight gain. During sleep, airflow is reduced, which strains the heart and leads to low levels of oxygen. The narrowed airways cause contraction of the muscle around the airways with people that have asthma, thus worsening the symptoms of the condition.

## **How asthma affects sleep apnea**

Asthma is seen as a condition that occurs during the day, but its symptoms can worsen at night. At night, people with asthma find it difficult to pull oxygen into their lungs, results in attacks. Thus, the airways become restricted and inflamed.

It is usually difficult to wake up after such nocturnal attacks because the body struggles to restore normal airflow. Since asthma can trigger more apneas, it is a contributing factor to high blood pressure, stroke, heart attacks, depression, weight gain, among many other conditions.

## **Obesity: and how it affects both conditions**

Obesity plays a significant role in asthma and obstructive sleep apnea. Fatty tissue in the throat and neck collapse when patients lay down, causing blocked airways. In obese people, more fat surrounds the lungs, so inflammations are worsened.

## **Treatment for Obstructive Sleep Apnea and asthma**

- 1. Continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP):** This is the most suitable treatment for sleep apnea. A device that provides an air stream is worn. This mask-like device maintains the correct oxygen levels that the body needs. CPAP therapy reduces stress, provides more energy and stronger immunity in the body. You can get therapy or the mask for this condition from [Easy CPAP](#).
- 2. Uvulopalatopharyngoplasty (UPPP):** UPPP is a surgical procedure used many ailments including obstructive sleep apnea. In the procedure, the tonsils and some parts of the uvula and palate are removed. [UPPP](#) is recommended for patients that are not obese or overweight. However, most people still end up needing CPAP therapies after this surgical procedure.
- 3. Nebulizers:** It is difficult for children who have asthma to use inhalers. Fortunately, nebulizers are a recommended alternative.

Nebulizers transmit pressurized air into the nose through a mask. This mechanism allows asthmatic medication to enter the lungs directly. Children only need to use the device for a couple of minutes for every treatment, and they come in fun colors and designs.

### **Preventing Asthma and Sleep apnea**

Managing these conditions is the way forward for those who have been diagnosed with obstructive sleep apnea or asthma. It is crucial that you take your medications and use the CPAP mask daily. You should also keep a moderate lifestyle and watch everything you eat. Reduce or avoid (if you can) your carbs, junk food, and sugar intake and replace them with healthy food like fruits and vegetables. Exercising daily will also reduce your stress level and burn excess fat.

### **In conclusion**

To simply answer the question, obstructive sleep apnea and asthma are related. Obstructive sleep apnea causes or worsens the symptoms of asthma, and the latter affects the former as well. Nevertheless, it is possible for people who do not have asthma to suffer from sleep apnea. Taking the right steps to manage both conditions is vital, as they can lead to other life-threatening ailments.