

OBSTRUCTIVE SLEEP APNEA



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There is a difference between snoring and obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). During normal sleep, the muscles that control the tongue and soft palate hold the airway open. If these muscles relax, the airway will become narrower, partially blocking the air passage. As one breathes in, the soft or floppy part of the throat vibrates and the noise of snoring results. If the throat is already narrow, or the muscles relax too much, the airway can become completely blocked, preventing breathing. When this happens repeatedly over the night, it is known as obstructive sleep apnea syndrome.

The word apnea comes from the Greek prefix *a* meaning “no” and the Greek word *pnosis* meaning “breath.” People with sleep apnea can stop breathing for 10 to 30 seconds at a time, as many as 400 times a night.

Obesity is fairly common among people with OSA. However, not everyone who is overweight suffers from OSA, nor is everyone who has OSA necessarily overweight. There are studies currently being done on the connection between OSA and various health issues.

Complications from OSA may include:

- **Cardiovascular problems:** Sudden drops in blood oxygen levels that occur during OSA increase blood pressure and strain the cardiovascular system. Almost ½ of all people with OSA develop high blood pressure (hypertension), which raises the risk of heart failure and stroke.
- **Daytime fatigue:** Repeated awakenings make normal, restorative sleep impossible. People with OSA often experience severe daytime drowsiness, fatigue and irritability.
- **Complications with medications and surgery:** OSA also is a concern with certain medications and general anesthesia. People with OSA may be more likely to experience

complications following major surgery because they’re prone to breathing problems, especially when sedated and lying on their backs.

- **Sleep deprived partners:** A loud snore can exceed 100 decibels. This can keep those around you from getting good rest.
- **Automobile and work accidents:** Due to daytime weariness, studies indicate that those suffering from untreated OSA may be more likely to have an automobile or work related accident.

If you have a sleep disorder, you may be the last person to recognize the symptoms. Often it is a friend or loved one who notices that someone’s sleep or breathing during sleep is not quite normal.

Members are encouraged to become aware of the importance of educating themselves and others where obstructive sleep apnea is concerned.

Recommended Action Plan

1. Write letters or send e-mails to your local member of the legislative assembly and provincial minister of health requesting that the provincial government promote an awareness of sleep apnea, the signs and symptoms and the potential complications.
2. Request information from your local health unit.
3. If you suspect that you or someone in your family has OSA, contact your doctor and ask to be referred to a qualified sleep specialist.

Thank you to B.C. & Yukon Provincial Council for informing members about obstructive sleep apnea and providing this information. †

ST. JOSEPH PARISH COUNCIL, HUNTINGDON, QUEBEC

On November 5, 2006, Bishop Luc Cyr (Valleyfield) and Spiritual Advisor Father Gabriel Clément celebrated the contribution of 14 founding members who have led St. Joseph Parish Council with dedication and untiring spirit. The council has 76 members, many of whom are mothers and daughters, thus the theme for the event, *Passing the Flame*.

The members received lovely corsages of yellow roses, a certificate of merit, a lapel pin (a dove with a pearl in its beak), a medal and an Our Lady of Good Counsel prayer card.

