I Have Sleep Apnea What Now?

Commonly asked questions about Sleep, Sleep Apnea and Treatment Options.

A patient information booklet

If you've been diagnosed with Sleep Apnea, you are not alone.

An estimated 100 million people across the globe have Sleep Apnea as per data from the World Health Organization.

So, what does a normal night's sleep look like?

A normal night's sleep is like a beautiful slow swell on the ocean, a series of waves where you go into deep sleep and REM (rapid eye movement), three or four times per night. In deep sleep your body and brain recuperates from the day's activities and after a great night's sleep you will awake feeling refreshed and recharged.

So, what happens with Sleep Apnea?

Apnea means "cessation of breath". With Sleep Apnea, the normal slow sleep wave is interrupted when the patient stops breathing during the night.

In deep sleep the muscles completely relax and the tongue can drop back to close off the airway. This occurs particularly when the susceptible patient sleeps on their back in what is called the supine position.

Apneas can last for seconds and in the severe cases over a minute in duration (try holding your breath for a minute when you are awake). The brain registers that there is a buildup of carbon dioxide in the blood and releases adrenalin to wake the body up and start breathing.

This can happen many times during the night and instead of a beautiful slow restful swell your ocean swell becomes a chop with many moments of wakefulness.

Patients with sleep apnea will often complain of waking up tired and are often generally sleepy during the day, due to their interrupted sleep.

So, why should I seek treatment?

We all know how it feels when we have one bad night's sleep

- Tired during the day
- Grumpy
- Short tempered
- Can't think straight

Sound Familiar?

Sleep is the basis of good health, feeling well and being happy. Sleep gives our body and mind time to recover and rejuvenate.

So, imagine if you didn't sleep well every night of the week.

Daytime tiredness can impact on you, your relationships, your career, and left untreated can lead to debilitating illnesses.

We all know about the dangers of the tired driver and the increased risk of motor vehicle accidents.

Today employers recognise the danger of Sleep Apnea and actively screen for sleep apnea in the workplace. This is common in the transport and mining industries.

But aside from safety in the workplace every individual should be aware that if left untreated Sleep Apnea will have long term health effects, including:

- An increased risk of Cardiovascular Disease
- An increased risk of Stroke
- An increased risk of Diabetes
- An increased risk of Depression

What are the treatment options?

Once diagnosed your physician will discuss treatment options with you.
Besides surgery and weight loss, your main options are CPAP, a machine which delivers pressurised air through a mask to open your airway, or OAT, an oral appliance created by SomnoMed that a trained dentist custom fits to your mouth. Before choosing a sleep apnea treatment option, talk with your doctor. The severity of your sleep apnea and your current physical and medical condition will determine the best treatment option for you.

Conservative Management:

Weight Loss – In overweight patients losing weight is advisable as it can help reduce apneas and may alleviate symptoms.

Positional Therapy – If your sleep apnea is dependent on the position you are sleeping, for example apnea mostly occurs when you are lying on your back; then positional therapy may be an option for you. There is a range of devices such as bumper belts and vibrating collars that can help guide you back to a side sleeping position and reduce apneas.

Health & Sleep Hygiene – In some cases quitting smoking, reducing your intake of alcohol or the use of nasal sprays to treat allergies may be helpful and have an effect on your sleep related breathing disorder.

OAT: Oral Appliance Therapy

SomnoDent OAT or Oral Appliance Therapy is recommended for use in patients with mild to moderate OSA or in severe cases where you are not able to manage CPAP therapy.

OAT is a custom fitted dental device worn while you sleep that fits over your upper and lower teeth and is designed to keep you airway open by holding your lower jaw forward. It is comfortable, discreet and easy to use. Thus most patients have no problem wearing OAT all night every night. A recent clinical trial involving compliance monitoring micro-chips found average nightly usage of SomnoDent was 7.5 hours. (ref .1)

These devices are fitted by a dentist over a number of visits and may need to be adjusted to ensure the device is working well. Because the causes of OSA vary it is hard to predict how well an oral device will work for you. Part of the cost of OAT is covered by most health insurance providers.

CPAP: Continuous Positive Airway Pressure

CPAP is recommended for use in Moderate to Severe OSA. It is a machine that delivers pressurized air through a mask placed over your nose and mouth while you sleep.

Although CPAP is a very reliable method of treatment some people find it cumbersome and uncomfortable. Due to this patients may not wear their device all night every night which reduces the effectiveness of the treatment. Recent data from the SAVE study showed average CPAP use to be 3.3 hours per night. (ref 2.)
CPAP should be fitted by a professional technician who can find a mask that is as comfortable for you as possible. Trials of CPAP can be offered before purchasing a machine. Part of the cost of CPAP is covered by most health insurance providers.

Surgery:

Surgery may be considered where there is a distinct obstruction to the nose and/or throat. There are many types of operations that can be performed depending on the problem and this will require an opinion from an Ear Nose & Throat surgeon. The risks and benefits need to be weighed up in each case and is often considered a last resort.

Surgery can however be used in conjunction with another treatment option. For example nasal surgery may be required to assist CPAP or MAS treatment and allow for suitable airflow and make the treatment more tolerable. In children with OSA surgery to remove tonsils and adenoids is common and often very beneficial.

Commonly asked questions

I am sleeping poorly but I don't know what the problem is?

Talk to your doctor and ask for a referral to a sleep specialist to have a sleep study to identify the issue and discuss treatment options.

I had a sleep study some time ago but never did anything about it. Can I start treatment now?

Treatment referrals are active for 3 years. If your referral has expired talk to your doctor about another sleep study. These can be performed with an overnight sleep study in a sleep clinic or as a home sleep study in the comfort of your own bed.

I am struggling with CPAP. I don't like the idea of a mask. How does the mouth guard work?

The SomnoDent (OAT) works by gently holding your jaw forward during sleep. This improves the patency of the airway reducing snoring and sleep apneas.

It is a comfortable two piece "mouth guard" that can be adjusted to bring your jaw further forward if needed, and it is fitted by a dentist trained in sleep medicine.

There is an increasing body of evidence to show that SomnoMed OAT is effective because of the high level of patient comfort. Patients wear their SomnoDent on average 7.5 hours per night (ref 1). While average nightly useage of CPAP in a recent study was 3.3 hours per night (ref2)

I travel a lot. What treatment would you recommend?

SomnoDent is the ideal traveling companion with no batteries, wires, plugs or extra luggage. SomnoDent comes in a convenient travel case which fits neatly into your toiletry bag.

How long will the process take?

Custom fitting for your SomnoDent is done during an appointment with your sleep dentist. Receiving your solution back from the company takes approximately 4 weeks.

What will my out of pocket expense be?

This will depend on your plan coverage. Please confirm coverage with your carrier.

An estimated 100 million people across the globe have sleep apnea according to the World Health Organization.

So, what is the process from here?

When your physician recommends OAT you'll be directed to a SomnoMed dentist for an initial consultation. At your first visit your dentist will confirm that a SomnoDent device is suitable for you.

Once confirmed and you are happy to proceed, your trained dentist will take a scan of your upper and lower teeth and send these scans to SomnoMed where we make up your custom made SomnoDent. After two weeks your dentist will make a second appointment time to come back in and have your device fitted.

Comfort is the key to successful treatment and your dentist will ensure your new device fits well, is comfortable and retentive. The dentist will give you instructions on fitting and removing your device and cleaning and care instructions.

Your dentist will book you in for a third consultation after you have become used to wearing your device. If everything is going well and you are sleeping well and feeling better there is no need to adjust the device. If however there are still some symptoms your dentist will titrate the device and move your jaw a little further forward.

You may also be referred back to your Sleep Physician within the next 12 months for a follow up appointment to make sure that your new SomnoDent device is effective in treating your sleep apnea.

Ref 1: Objective compliance and head position monitoring of mandibular advancement splint therapy for sleep-disordered breathing – a preliminary investigation Dr Joachim Ngiam Department of Respiratory and Sleep Medicine, Royal North Shore Hospital, Sydney, NSW, Australia;
Ref 2: CPAP for Prevention of Cardiovascular Events in Obstructive Sleep Apnea N Engl J Med 2016; 375:919-931September 8, 2016

An Australian Success story.

SomnoMed® started up in Sydney in 2004 based on the invention of local dentist Dr Richard Palmisano.

Using the SomnoDent device over **660,000** people around the world have experienced more energy, feel better, begin dreaming again and enjoy restful, satisfying sleep again.

"Excellent outcome with uninterrupted sleep and no drowsiness the following day. Easy to wear and quite comfortable"

"Found it solved my problem and ease of use makes it ideal for my lifestyle. Glad it was recommended"

" It is more comfortable, convenient and transportable than CPAP"

" Thanks for improving my life. I feel normal again"

We hope this information has been useful and has given you reassurance that this is a very positive step to better sleep and a healthier you.

Find out more information about **SomnoMed®** or find a provider by visiting **somnomed.com.**

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