

## Apnoea # Hypopnoea

Does someone in your house suffer with sleep apnea? If so, you'll know it. On the surface, sleep apnea can seem just like a hefty bout of snoring. The long-term effects, however, can be devastating.

Many men, women and even children suffer from sleep apnea without even realizing it. When people with apnea fall asleep, the muscles in the upper part of the airway begin to fall in on themselves. This can be the result of a number of underlying conditions. For example, being overweight can cause tissues and muscles in the airway to become flabby. The airway becomes blocked, causing the person to actually stop breathing for a few seconds. When the brain kicks into action, the breathless sleeper awakes with a loud snore or snort, gasping for air. It's a frightening and bothersome condition for both the person suffering apnea, and those sleeping close by.

Several instances of apnea can occur during the night, and some people can experience apnea dozens of times in a single night. Of course, the sleep pattern is incomplete, and it is virtually impossible for him or her to reach a proper state of REM sleep. When daytime comes, she or he will be drowsy, cranky, and ineffective. The symptoms of sleep apnea can range from the seemingly minor, to those that are quite relentless and even threatening.

### Apnoea # Hypopnoea Index

If you feel that you, or your partner, suffer with sleep apnea that should be monitored and controlled, there is an index that can be used. Called the Apnoea-Hypopnoea Index, this formula is used to determine the severity of the problem. Hypopnoea is the term used for the reduction of airflow passing through the airways. Using this index, the number of apnea attacks is determined, along with the number of hypopnoeas. A scale is then used to determine the severity of the condition.

### Apnoea # Hypopnoea Scale

When the information has been plotted, your doctor will be able to assess your AHI (Apnoea-Hypopnoea Index) results, using the Apnoea-Hypopnoea Scale.

**AHI less than 10:** This score suggests that the extent of the apnea problem probably does not have any underlying medical problems. With this information in hand, the person suffering apnea can stop worrying about possible health risks, and begin focusing on a way to stop the snoring.

**AHI above 10:** A person showing this score should be concerned about underlying medical problems. If you present with an AHI score over 10, you might consider taking part in a specialized sleep study. You'll be asked to spend the night in the hospital, where special equipment will be used to monitor the amount, quality and type of sleep you are getting. If the study shows that you are being deprived of oxygen in your sleep, you could be at risk of cardiac problems, stroke or Adult Sudden Death Syndrome.

There are several methods of treating sleep apnea. In severe cases, an oxygen mask is worn to bed, providing a steady stream of oxygen to keep the airways open throughout the night.

If you, your partner or child may be experiencing sleep apnea, don't take unnecessary risks. See your doctor and ask to speak with a sleep disorder specialist. Use the Apnoea-Hypopnoea Index and Scale to assess the problem, and then you can find the solution. You'll all sleep happily ever after.