

- Sleep apnoea / Sleep disorders

Snoring loudly a sign of serious health issue: Doc

Khaleej Times · 20 Mar 2024 · 5 · Ashwani Kumar ashwani@khaleejtimes.com

Loud snoring, gasping for breath during sleep, or nodding off during daytime are among the signs of a serious health condition, a leading medical expert said.



Dr Subhashini PR, specialist ENT and a skull base surgeon at NMC Royal Hospital, Sharjah, noted that obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) is a prevalent condition, but most people don't realise it's a health problem.

“Recognising sleep apnea often involves noticing symptoms by bed partners such as snoring, intermittent gasping for breath during sleep, waking up with headaches, daytime sleepiness, and nodding off during routine activities like watching TV or waiting at traffic signals,” Dr Subhashini PR, specialist ENT and a skull base surgeon at NMC Royal Hospital, Sharjah, told Khaleej Times.

“Other symptoms may include fatigue, body aches and muscle pain. They often experience a lack of feeling well-rested and find themselves easily falling asleep.”

“During sleep apnea, when the airway becomes obstructed, the brain's monitoring of vital signs such as oxygen levels reaching the brain, detects insufficient oxygen and signals the body to wake up,” she said and pointed out that the pattern can occur repeatedly throughout the night, sometimes as often as once per minute.

Dr Subhashini said that when nasal airflow decreases, it can lead to a drop in oxygen saturation below 97 per cent. “Once the individual breathes in enough oxygen, the brain resumes sleep, but this cycle repeats throughout the night. Men are typically more prone to obstructive sleep apnea than women due to factors such as increased tongue size and larger airways, which can lead to airway blockages during sleep.”

Several leading researchers and journals have reported the day-night pattern of sudden death in individuals with OSA.

“The peak time for cardiac arrests in obstructive sleep apnea patients, between midnight and 6am, reflects the heightened risk during nighttime sleep. During these hours, the body's natural fluctuations make breathing and heart function more challenging, leading to increased danger from sleep apnea-related complications,” Dr Subhashini said.

“During the day, patients with obstructive sleep apnea experience heightened sympathetic activity, causing their blood pressure to remain elevated without the usual dips seen in those without sleep apnea.”

Dr Subhashini noted that among the primary tests used for diagnosing sleep disorders is polysomnography, considered the gold standard.

“This comprehensive test monitors various parameters, including brain activity, eye movements, respiratory rate, chest and abdominal movement, airflow, oxygen saturation, and leg movements. It provides a detailed picture of sleep patterns and any potential abnormalities.”

“You should consider getting tested for OSA if you experience daytime sleepiness, have gained about 10kg in the last six months, have a family history of OSA combined with daytime sleepiness, or if you are hypertensive and multiple combinations of antihypertensive medications have not effectively lowered your blood pressure. These factors indicate a potential risk of OSA and warrant further evaluation,” Dr Subhashini underlined.

Recognising sleep apnea often involves noticing symptoms by bed partners such as snoring, intermittent gasping for breath during sleep, waking up with headaches, daytime sleepiness, and nodding off during routine activities like watching TV or waiting at traffic signals.” Dr Subhashini
PR NMC Royal Hospital, Sharjah