

# Sleep Problems

## Following Stroke



### Sleep Problems Overview:

- Post stroke, it is common for people to report sleeping problems and poor sleep quality
- A common problem is sleep disordered breathing, also known as **sleep apnea**
- Another common sleep problem is **insomnia**
  - What is it? Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, getting back to sleep or early awakening
  - Twice as common in women as in men
- Other common sleep disorders
  - Restless leg syndrome
  - Periodic limb movement disorder

### General Effects of Poor Sleep:

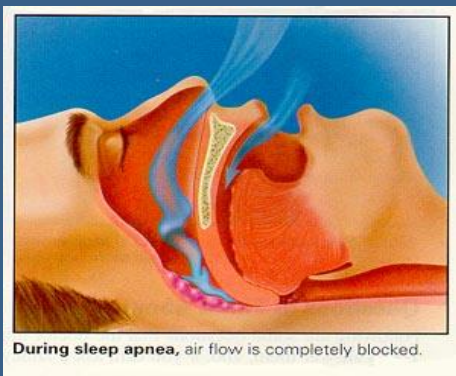
- Poor mental and physical recovery from stroke
- Less benefit from exercise
- Memory problems
- Poor concentration
- Irritability
- Daytime sleepiness or unplanned sleeping during the day
- Frustration, risk of accident, injury, falls



### Some Causes of Sleep Disturbance

- Caffeine, nicotine, or other stimulating drugs near bedtime may prevent a person from falling asleep.
- Depression and anxiety are more prevalent post-stroke and can contribute to sleep disorders.
- Anxiety may impair falling asleep, and depression may cause early morning awakening.
- Pain (joint, muscle, arthritis), medications, frequent urination, loss of a loved one, the bed partner.

## Sleep Apnea



During sleep apnea, air flow is completely blocked.

\* Important risk factor for stroke and heart disease \*

- As serious as diabetes
- Is under-diagnosed
- 90% of people who have sleep apnea don't know about it
- Up to 70% of people who have had a stroke may have sleep apnea

### Risks of untreated Sleep Apnea

- Four times more likely to have a stroke
- High blood pressure difficult to control
- Heart disease & heart attack
- Irregular heart beat
- Heart failure
- Type 2 diabetes and poor control of diabetes
- Glaucoma
- Traffic accidents
- Poor job performance
- Benefits from rehabilitation will be decreased
- Obesity, depression, fatigue

## How Do I Know If I Have Sleep Apnea?

**Possible** Signs and Symptoms may include:

- Nighttime snorting, gasping, choking
- Snoring
- High Blood Pressure (difficult to treat)
- Waking up tired
- Morning Headache
- Dry mouth on waking up
- Unplanned sleeping in daytime
- **Someone has witnessed you stopping breathing at night**

## Treatment of Sleep Apnea



**CPAP: Continuous Positive Airway Pressure**

## What Can I Do To Sleep Better?

- Try to go to sleep at the same time each night and get up at the same time each morning.
- Do not take naps after 3 p.m. and limit naps to less than 45 minutes.
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol 4 hours before bedtime (coffee, tea, some sodas, chocolate).
- Get regular exercise but not right before bed. Exercise, particularly in the afternoon can improve sleep.
- Make sure you eat dinner at least 2 to 3 hours before bedtime.
- Follow a routine to help you relax and wind down before sleep, such as reading a book, listening to music, or taking a bath.
- Keep your bedroom dark, quiet, and cool.
- If light is a problem, try a sleeping mask.
- If noise is a problem, try earplugs, a fan, or a "white noise" machine to cover up the sounds.
- If you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes or don't feel drowsy get up and read or do something that is not too active until you feel sleepy. Then try going back to bed.
- If you lay awake worrying about things, try making a to-do list before you go to bed.
- See your doctor or Dr. Reitav if you think that you have insomnia or another sleep problem
- Use your bed only for sleep (not an office).
- Warm milk before bed can help.
- Slow Breathing
  - Breath in 3 seconds and breath out 3 seconds
  - Pause for 3 seconds
  - After 5 minutes say "relax"

