Symptoms of sleep apnea

- Loud snoring
- Disrupted sleep
- Gasping and choking at night
- Nighttime sweating
- Teeth grinding
- Daytime fatigue/sleepiness
- Breathing stops while sleeping

Physical findings in sleep apnea

- Overweight/obese
- Small mouth, jaw and throat
- Receding jaw
- Large tongue
- Short, thick neck
- Swollen legs

Sleep disorder equipment and supplies can be obtained from:

Oakwood Home Medical Equipment
1633 Fairlane Circle, Suite 200
Allen Park, MI 48101
800.752.2273 or 313.271.8120

Oakwood has two convenient locations to serve your sleep apnea needs.

**Oakwood Sleep Center**

**Canton**

Willow Creek Plaza
42180 Ford Road
Suite 201
Canton, Michigan 48187
734.844.6042

**Oakwood Sleep Center**

**Riverview**

14031 Pennsylvania Road
Suite A
Riverview, Michigan 48192
734.285.4145

oakwood.org
What is sleep apnea?
Obstructive sleep apnea is caused by blockage of the throat while sleeping. Obstructed breathing causes many partial awakenings (arousals), 60 or 70 times or more per hour, disrupting the flow of sleep and resulting in fatigue and sleepiness the next day. Obstructive apnea only occurs during sleep because the tongue and soft tissues of the throat are more relaxed at that time.

What happens in sleep apnea? Panel A shows a normal-sized tongue, soft palate, uvula and throat. Panel B shows how these structures are enlarged and can obstruct the throat in apnea patients.

Symptoms of sleep apnea
Snoring, daytime sleepiness and fatigue are the most common symptoms of this disorder and may affect up to 10 percent of adults. The majority of patients with sleep apnea snore heavily. The sleep of family members will be disturbed by the persistence and volume of the snoring, which may drive the bed partner from the room.

Apnea patients may have difficulty falling asleep or have disrupted sleep with early morning awakenings. Sometimes apnea sufferers awaken frequently to urinate, attributing this to a bladder problem rather than a sleep disorder causing arousal.

The sleep of apnea patients is not refreshing, and patients are often just as tired in the morning as when they went to sleep. Some patients have a dry mouth, sore throat or even a headache upon awakening.

Most apnea patients have daytime fatigue and sleepiness. The tendency to doze can be severe and often occurs during sedentary activities, such as watching TV, reading or sitting at meetings.

Dozing off while driving also may happen. Patients who start to fall asleep while driving may go off the road or hit the median stripes. Car crashes are more common in sleep apnea patients, with the highest-risk times being 3 p.m. and 4 a.m. The history of a car crash can be the most significant predictor of a future sleep-related auto mishap.

Physical findings in sleep apnea
The majority of apnea patients are overweight, while one-third are of normal weight but have small or receding jaws that may push the tongue backward against the throat. The throat is further diminished as people gain weight, because fat is deposited in the tongue and surrounding tissues.

A small mouth and throat with a large tongue can additionally be associated with coughing and choking when eating. One of the most common physical findings is a short, thick neck that may measure up to 18 to 20 inches.

Complications of sleep apnea
The reductions in the blood oxygen level during apnea may result in heart and lung problems including heart attacks, heart failure, unusual heartbeats and swollen ankles. Strokes are more common in apnea suffers, as is impotency in males. Hypertension and depression are among the most common complications of untreated sleep apnea.

Making a diagnosis
If you have symptoms of sleep apnea, you may need to participate in an overnight sleep study, called polysomnography, to confirm the diagnosis. Typically this involves spending the night in a sleep center, where monitoring devices will be attached to your chest and face. Most patients fall asleep without difficulty.

Treatment of sleep apnea
Mild obstructive sleep apnea may be treated with conservative measures, such as losing weight and attempting to sleep on one's side so the tongue does not fall backward. Most patients, however, need to wear a mask, called continuous positive airway pressure or CPAP, over their nose at night. CPAP has a fan that gently blows air into the nose and expands the throat, making breathing easier. Some patients may require nose, throat or jaw surgery.

Sleepy people who snore
Obstructive sleep apnea is a common disorder that affects millions of Americans, causing medical, emotional and social problems. If you suffer from snoring, fatigue and sleepiness, ask your doctor about getting a sleep study to diagnose this easily treatable problem.