

## WHAT IS SLEEP APNEA?

*From reading too much, and sleeping too little,  
his brain dried up on him and he lost his judgment...Miguel De Cervantes*

### WHAT TO KNOW!

- ❖ Sleep apnea is a common sleeping disorder where there are one or more pauses in breathing or there are shallow breaths while sleeping
- ❖ Breathing pauses can last from a few seconds to minutes and can occur 30 times or more an hour after which normal breathing begins often with a snorting sound
- ❖ It is a chronic condition and since the quality of sleep is very poor, you can feel tired all day long the next day
- ❖ **Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA)** is the most common type of sleep apnea where the airway becomes blocked or collapses during sleep
- ❖ OSA is common in overweight people and snoring occurs when air is squeezed past the blockage
- ❖ **Central Sleep Apnea (CSA)** is much less common and occurs when the brain does not send signals to your muscles to breathe
- ❖ CSA can occur with OSA and is most common in people with certain medical conditions or who take certain medications; snoring usually doesn't happen
- ❖ Airways can become blocked by throat and tongue muscles relaxing more than normal, tongue and tonsils tissue being large, fat tissue from being overweight thickens the windpipe wall, or aging impairs the brain's ability to keep the airway from collapsing
- ❖ Stress hormones can be released by low blood oxygen levels and can lead to high blood pressure, heart attack and failure, stroke and arrhythmias
- ❖ In addition to snoring, other signs of Sleep Apnea include memory, learning, and concentration problems, morning headaches, feeling irritable or depressed, frequent waking up to urinate, and dry mouth or throat upon awakening
- ❖ Sleep apnea and its severity is diagnosed through a sleep study which measures how well you sleep and how you respond to sleep problems
- ❖ After diagnosis, sleep apnea is treated by using breathing devices, surgery, mouthpieces, and making changes to your lifestyle
- ❖ Treatment is to restore regular breathing during sleep, decrease snoring and daytime sleepiness, and improve high blood pressure, heart disease, and memory
- ❖ The CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) machine is the most common treatment; it uses a mask over your nose that blows air into your throat

### WHAT TO DO!

- ❖ Lose excess weight and exercise to reduce constriction of your throat
- ❖ Avoid alcohol and certain medications such as muscle relaxants and sleeping pills
- ❖ Sleep on your side or abdomen and not on your back
- ❖ Use a saline nasal spray to keep your nostrils open at night
- ❖ Stop smoking as it worsens OSA
- ❖ Try an oral appliance usually obtained from a dentist to keep the airway open
- ❖ Consult with your physician and obtain a sleep study and CPAP machine
- ❖ Seek professional help to develop coping strategies to deal with the emotional consequences of having sleep apnea

### WE CAN HELP!

Call us at **954 755-2885** or email us at [\*\*DrKimmel@KimmelPsychology.com\*\*](mailto:DrKimmel@KimmelPsychology.com)

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