

# Serious sleep disorder may be misdiagnosed in women



Have you noticed all those energy drink commercials? They seem to suggest you need that extra energy boost, when your energy level starts to droop. Most likely it's not so much about a drop in energy as it is about not enough sleep or poor quality sleep the night before.

There're a number of reasons for insomnia and poor sleep, but **the most dangerous of all is sleep apnea.**

The **most common form is obstructive sleep apnea** where the air passage is usually obstructed by surrounding tissue with weak muscle tone. As the brain attempts to send a signal to the breathing muscles, the inhaling breath gets obstructed resulting in a lower blood oxygen level and less blood oxygen circulating back to the brain.

**Sleep apnea often goes unrecognized or misdiagnosed.** While snoring, snorting and gasping are common indicators that usually dictate a sleeping test, **women may describe other symptoms less recognized as being associated with sleep apnea.**

In getting a proper diagnosis, many women encounter health professionals more experienced with the middle age/overweight male profile for sleep apnea and not the more subtle sleep breathing disturbances they may experience.

**Some of the symptoms women are more likely to describe than men are –**

- insomnia
- chronic fatigue
- depression
- waking with headaches
- waking with a dry mouth
- mood swings

Consequently, health care professional and the women themselves tend towards treatment for these symptoms rather than considering sleep apnea.

**Related conditions associated with sleep apnea with obstruction for women include:**

- Hypertension
- Depression
- Dry mouth
- Weight gain
- Cardiovascular disease
- Heart attacks and strokes
- Type 2 diabetes
- Polycystic ovary syndrome
- Hypothyroidism

For women it's possible for obstructive sleep apnea to be misdiagnosed. If you suspect this may be an issue for you, see your health care professional immediately and discuss having a sleep test to determine the nature of any sleep disturbances. **Having a deep, restful and restorative night's sleep is something your brain will love you for in the morning.**

**Sources:**

American Academy of Sleep Medicine <http://yoursleep.aasmnet.org/article.aspx?id=776>

<http://www.journalsleep.org/ViewAbstract.aspx?pid=26117>