

Obstructive Sleep Apnea–Information Sheet

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Condition: Events of intermittent, short, blockage of breathing while asleep.
Each blockage last from 10 seconds to over a minute.
Events can be partial (Hypopnea) or completed (Apnea).
To have the condition diagnosed, insurance requires 5 events an hour.

Effects: Events disturbed sleep and causes symptoms (tiredness, poor quality sleep, headaches).
The events cause long-term illnesses (hypertension, diabetes, strokes, and heart attacks).

Diagnoses: Individuals usually have symptoms.
Significant others often observe problems.
Testing shows the obstructions and determines the frequency per hour.

Testing: Home Sleep Apnea Testing can be used to measure the number of obstructive apnea events.
Sleep center testing (polysomnograms) can be used to measure the events and evaluate for other sleep disorders. A trial of therapy can be performed during the polysomnogram in some situations.

Counting: The number of events while asleep is counted and the number per hour of sleep is calculated.
The Apnea Hypopnea Index (AHI) is the number of events per hour.

Severity: The severity of the obstructive sleep apnea is rated by the number of times per hour of sleep the blockages occurred on testing.

Mild apnea - the AHI is 5 to 14

Moderate apnea – the AHI is 15 to 30

Severe apnea – the AHI is greater than 30

The highest levels recorded are AHIs of 130 to 135.

The level or the AHI is a good predictor of the long-term effects of the apnea.

Symptoms are **not** always a good indicator of the AHI.

Goals of treatment:

Improve symptoms – Sleep better

Reduce the number of events to less than 5 per hour – Live better longer.

