

Types of sleep apnea

There are three types of sleep apnea: obstructive, central, and mixed.

Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA)

OSA is the most common type of sleep apnea. It is caused by a breathing obstruction, which stops the air flow in the nose and mouth.

Central Sleep Apnea (CSA)

Central sleep apnea is a far rarer type of sleep apnea, which occurs when the brain signal that instructs the body to breathe is delayed. This central nervous system disorder can be caused by disease or injury involving the brainstem, such as a stroke, a brain tumor, a viral brain infection, or a chronic respiratory disease. People with CSA seldom snore, which makes it even harder to diagnose as they do not fit the "normal" profile of a sleep apnea sufferer. However, while the causes of the breathing cessation are different in CSA and OSA, the symptoms and results are much the same – a deprivation of oxygen and poor sleep due to repeated awakenings at night. The treatments for CSA include specific medications that stimulate the need to breathe and administration of oxygen.

Mixed sleep apnea

Mixed sleep apnea is a combination of the two other types of sleep apnea, Obstructive Sleep Apnea and Central Sleep Apnea. A person with mixed sleep apnea will often snore, but finds that treatments which only help obstructions in the airways do not completely stop apnea episodes. Treatment usually includes a combination of the treatments used for OSA and CSA.