



One out of every six Americans is affected by a sleep disorder, including insomnia (dysomnia), excessive sleepiness (hypersomnia), and abnormal behaviors during sleep (parasomnia). Often, they suffer needlessly, unaware that there are effective prevention and treatment tactics that can help. Pulmonary specialists at UPMC St. Margaret's Center for Lung and Thoracic Diseases are committed to diagnosing, treating, and managing a variety of sleep disorders using state-of-the-art technology and a multidisciplinary approach to patient care.

Center for Sleep Disorders

Sleep disorders vary in nature and degree. Sleep apnea, a common condition, occurs when a patient temporarily stops breathing while sleeping. As a result, the patient's blood oxygen level may drop, and the disruption in breathing will cause the patient to arouse out of a deep, refreshing sleep into a very light sleep. Sleep becomes interrupted, and as a result, the patient feels tired rather than refreshed after waking up in the morning. Other symptoms can include morning headaches, mental confusion, and depression. A patient's bed partner typically tells the doctor about symptoms such as loud snoring and periods when the patient is not breathing.

There are two main types of sleep apnea. The first and most common is obstructive sleep apnea, which occurs when breathing is disrupted temporarily by a narrowing or obstruction of the main airway. The second type is central apnea, which occurs when the breathing control center in the brain does not send the usual signals to breath to the respiratory system.

People who endure sleep apnea often are not aware of their condition; they do not realize how often they are awakened during sleep. They can find many excuses to explain their fatigue, including advancing age. There is a higher incidence of stroke, heart attack, congestive heart failure, and cardiac arrhythmias in patients with untreated sleep apnea. Because many serious health conditions may arise from undiagnosed sleep apnea, it is imperative that patients seek treatment.

The Center for Sleep Disorders at UPMC St. Margaret uses state-of-the-art digital equipment to monitor sleep and determine the nature and severity of sleep disorders. Staffed by expertly trained, caring, and experienced health care professionals, the Center

uses a multidisciplinary approach in the diagnosis and management of sleep disorders. Specialists in pulmonary medicine, neurology, and otorhinolaryngology (ear, nose, and throat) will collaborate on a patient's case, if needed.

If your doctor believes that you may have a sleep disorder, he or she will refer you to have a sleep study. A sleep study, or polysomnogram, consists of placing several small electrodes on the patient's body to document what happens during sleep. It is entirely painless. During the study, a technologist will monitor body movements, airflow, heart rate, and oxygen saturation.

In addition to offering advanced monitoring, the Center for Sleep Disorders at UPMC St. Margaret offers a "homelike" study environment. Each patient bedroom is furnished with a double bed and private bathroom. A shower also is available. Pillows and blankets are provided; however, patients are welcome to bring their own pillows and blankets if they prefer. To properly maintain the computerized equipment, the room temperature is kept at 68 to 70 degrees; so patients are asked to bring warm sleeping apparel. After the study is completed, coffee, tea, juice, and pastries are provided, or the patient may obtain a voucher and have breakfast at the hospital.

Most sleep studies are completed in two, separate nights. The Center's team of physicians will determine if additional testing is required. For more information about the Center for Sleep Disorders at UPMC St. Margaret, please call 412-784-4380. For patient referrals, please contact the Lung and Thoracic Diseases Center's nurse coordinator at 412-784-5827.