

CDC study forges link between depression and sleep apnea

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Obstructive sleep apnea and other symptoms of OSA are associated with probable major depression, regardless of factors like weight, age, sex or race, according to a new study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. There was no link between depression and snoring.

"Snorting, gasping or stopping breathing while asleep was associated with nearly all [depression symptoms](#), including feeling hopeless and feeling like a failure," said Anne G. Wheaton, PhD, lead author of the study. "We expected persons with sleep-disordered breathing to report trouble sleeping or sleeping too much, or feeling tired and having little energy, but not the other symptoms."

The study, appearing in the April issue of the journal *SLEEP*, is the first nationally representative sampling to examine this relationship, surveying 9,714 American adults. Previous studies have focused on smaller samples of specific populations, such as people suffering from obstructive [sleep apnea](#) (OSA), depression or other health conditions.

Wheaton, an [epidemiologist](#) with CDC, said the likelihood of depression increased with the reported frequency of snorting and/or instances when breathing stopped in the study. She suggested screening for these disorders in the presence of the other could help address the high prevalence and underdiagnosis of sleep apnea and depression, especially if sleepiness is a chief complaint.

Snorting, gasping and pauses in breathing during sleep are all signs of OSA, a common form of sleep-disordered breathing. Six percent of men and 3 percent of women in the study reported having physician-diagnosed sleep apnea. OSA occurs when the muscles relax during sleep, causing soft tissue in the back of the throat to collapse and block the upper airway.

More information: "Sleep Disordered Breathing and Depression among U.S. Adults: National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2005-2008," *SLEEP*.

Provided by American Academy of Sleep Medicine

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