

Obstructive Sleep Apnoea

What is it?

Obstructive sleep apnoea is when something partly or completely blocks the throat during sleep. This causes breathing to reduce or stop for a short time. Breathing then starts again, often with a gasp, snort, or body jerk. Snoring, tossing, turning, and night waking are symptoms. This condition is also linked with other health risks such as hypertension and diabetes.

What will my GP do now?

Your GP will help you develop a treatment plan for your condition.

Your GP may also want to talk to your partner about kicking, snoring, and waking during sleep. Knowing more about your sleep habits helps your GP to identify problems and develop a treatment plan.

Treatment will depend on:

- If your condition is severe or mild
- Your symptoms
- Other health issues, such as obesity which is a common cause
- Social factors, such as drinking

Not all patients need treatment. If your condition is not severe, your GP may suggest lifestyle changes instead.

If your GP recommends treatment, there are several options, including:

- Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (known as CPAP) – a safe, common solution
- Oral appliances – must be fitted by a dentist
- Surgery – in certain situations, upper airway surgery can be helpful

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP will see you regularly to check and monitor your condition and treatment.

You may be given a referral for a sleep assessment or a sleep study if your condition needs further testing.

What can I do?

When you have obstructive sleep apnoea, it's very important to be aware of the driving risks. Remember to:

- Take regular rest breaks when driving
- Share driving
- Pull over if you notice warning signs of sleepiness – nodding head, yawning, feeling warm
- Avoid driving when you would normally be asleep or if feeling tired
- Avoid driving long distances
- Avoid alcohol

Maintain a healthy lifestyle helps you feel better in general. The following tips can help:

- Exercise regularly
- Eat a healthy diet. If you are overweight, weight loss can be of great benefit
- Drink less than two standard drinks of alcohol daily
- Stop drinking alcohol four hours before bedtime
- Sleep on your side, not on your back

Talk to your GP about treating any nasal congestion

Be careful when driving

If you feel sleepy during the day, while driving, or if you have had a driving accident related to sleepiness, your GP may ask you to take the Epworth Sleepiness Score test.

This is a test that studies how sleepy you are during the day.

If you are a commercial driver, or operate heavy machines, you should get assessed for fit driving.

Your GP may ask you not to drive until your condition has been treated.

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What supports are available?

South Western Sydney has a range of sleep support services.

Sleep and respiratory specialists

Speak to your GP about a referral to a private specialist or sleep clinic.

Liverpool Hospital Sleep Service

A district-wide service offering various sleep medicine services. Your GP can refer you.

Camden Hospital Outpatient Sleep Clinic

The clinic offers a range of sleep services. Ask your GP for a referral.



What questions could I ask my doctor?

- How do I know if I need treatment?
- When can I expect to see improvement?
- What are the risks?
- What if my condition doesn't get better?



Where can I learn more?

If you'd like to read more about obstructive sleep apnoea, the following resources can help:

- **Australasian Sleep Association** – OSA factsheet: sleephealthfoundation.org.au
- **Austroads Assessing Fitness to Drive** – factsheet for private vehicle drivers: austroads.com.au
- **Austroads Assessing Fitness to Drive** – factsheet for commercial drivers: austroads.com.au
- **Patient.co.uk** – obstructive sleep apnoea syndrome: patient.info
- **Health Resource Directory** – sleep hygiene: healthresourcedirectory.org.au

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs