



Early diagnosis and treatment can prevent kids from becoming sick adults.

The Hidden Health Dangers of Unmanaged Sleep Apnea

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Researchers have found that diabetes and ADHD in children as well as heart attacks, strokes, and Alzheimer's Disease in adults are linked to unmanaged sleep apnea.

Why? Because regular *breathing* while asleep is as important as having a regular heartbeat—and sleep apnea disrupts a person's breathing.

Sleep apnea is a serious health condition involving repeated episodes of partial or complete blockage of the upper airway during sleep (obstructive apnea), and/or a temporary lack of respiratory drive and diaphragm movement (central apnea).

When a person stops breathing, the result is a sensation of suffocation and anxiety within about 10 – 15 seconds. This quickly escalates to panic by around 20 seconds, producing a spike in heart rate and blood pressure, the release of epinephrine (which is Adrenaline® in the commercial form), and the production of glucose in preparation for fighting or fleeing. Instead of an actual fight or flight, a mild awakening lasting more than three (3) seconds often occurs, which restores breathing but fragments sleep.

Similar to smoking cigarettes, researchers have determined that the dangers of repeated exposure to reduced inhaled air from apneas and the associated physiological stress of self-recoveries are cumulative.

Some of the ways that sleep apnea negatively impacts health include:

- **Diabetes:** Unmanaged sleep apnea has been linked to developing or worsening [Type 2 Diabetes](#) in children.
- **ADHD:** Research discovered that sleep apnea affects up to one-third of patients with [attention deficit hyperactivity disorder](#). Repeated attempts to inhale against a closed airway fragment sleep resulting in daytime sleepiness, hypertension, and impulsive behavior, symptoms that are associated with ADHD.
- **Cognitive Impairment:** Reduced attention span, difficulty concentrating, and [memory loss](#) from fragmented sleep impact a person's ability to learn, reason, and function fully in their daily life, especially [following a concussion](#).
- **Cardiovascular Disease:** High blood pressure, hypertension, stroke, and heart attacks are linked to unmanaged sleep apnea. Research has discovered that repeated spikes in heart rate caused by sleep apnea [weaken heart structures](#) over time.
- **Accidents:** Excessive daytime sleepiness has been closely linked to an increased risk of [transportation crashes](#) and [workplace accidents](#).
- **Decreased quality of life:** Sleep apnea can have a significant impact on a person's quality of life, causing fatigue, irritability, mood swings, life-threatening diseases, and [premature death](#).

These are just some of the medical issues that can occur. That's why it is imperative we diagnose and treat sleep apnea early, so we can reduce all of the other diseases linked to it.

3 Comments on Michael G. Nathans' article



Gregory Charlop, MD 1st degree connection 1stGirls' Health Advocate | Founder: Electric Avenue Properties and From Soccer to C-Suite | Featured on ABC, NBC, FOX, Forbes, and CBS | Author: Why Doctors Skip Breakfast | Supporter of Girls' Mental Health

Thank you for the thoughtful article. Untreated sleep apnea is poison for children [Michael G. Nathans](#)

Michael G. Nathans

"poison" is the right word and it's especially hard to detect because it is odorless and colorless, and it comes silently in the night when breathing stops and everyone else is asleep.

Two ways for parents to know if their kids are turning 'blue' at night from apneas and hypoxemia are to give them an online STOP-Bang screening test and send them to bed with a pulse oximeter that records and displays a histogram showing if and when during the night apneas likely occurred, and how severe they are. Home sleep tests are available by prescription and are replacing overnight sleep lab testing, but an overnight stay in a lab may be required to fit and adjust the pressure settings on a CPAP device and face-gear, as well as obtain test results using the gold standard for measurement.

STOP-Bang here: <http://www.stopbang.ca/osa/screening.php>

About the Author – Michael Nathans is the CEO and Co-Founder of WhisperSom Corporation, a medical device and informatics company. He holds a degree in Biology and Pre-healing Arts from Franklin & Marshall College and has a 35-year business and corporate governance background. Follow WhisperSom on Facebook for more information about sleep apnea. <https://www.facebook.com/WhisperSom>



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