

Are You Sick of Being Tired?

Nodding off? Maybe it's time for a sleep check-up. Stephan Alkins, MD, spends his days – and sometimes his nights – helping people sleep better thanks to the diagnostic services offered at Crouse Sleep Services.

There are a variety of sleep disorders. Some estimates suggest that 30 percent of the population suffers from insomnia, the chronic inability to fall asleep or remain asleep for an adequate length of time. Sleep apnea, which occurs when someone stops breathing while sleeping, affects about 5 percent of the population. “If you say snoring is a sleep disorder, you again have a tremendous number. People often don't even know they have a sleep disorder,” says Dr. Alkins, medical director of Crouse Sleep Services.

He sees everything from the extraordinary to the commonplace in sleep disorders. The unifying theme among his patients is that they all seem to be finding themselves excessively sleepy. Some realize they have a problem because of automobile accidents or falling asleep at work.

Check Your Risk Factors

“It's sometimes difficult for people to sort out their level of sleepiness and to figure out its cause,” says Dr. Alkins, who is board certified by the American Board of Sleep Medicine and the American Board of Internal Medicine.

More people are realizing they might have a problem thanks to the availability of information online and in the media, but sometimes it's simply the case of a bed partner complaining about nighttime snoring that motivates them to talk to their physician. Risk factors that may lead to a sleep disorder include being overweight, and in males, having a neck size of 17" or more. “A sleep disorder is a real disease, and it can have real consequences if left untreated,” says Dr. Alkins. Some of those consequences



Stephan Alkins, MD, was interviewed recently by NewsChannel 9's Carrie Lazarus for a feature on sleep disorders and their treatment. Lazarus also underwent an actual sleep study as part of the in-depth report.

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include excessive sleepiness, high blood pressure and the increased incidence of heart attacks and strokes. New studies are also indicating that untreated sleep apnea may worsen glucose control, and therefore treating the disorder may help diabetics. While sleepiness may not sound dangerous – falling asleep over a book or in front of the TV can seem fairly benign – it can lead to dozing off in a car while driving or at a stop sign or stop light.

Treatment: The Secret to a Good Night's Sleep

“With the proper diagnosis and treatment, many patients can see benefits almost immediately,” says Dr. Alkins.

Crouse offers primarily diagnostic services in its sleep lab, but treatment is also available for some disorders. Physicians can refer their adult patients to the sleep lab for diagnosis and/or ask for a consultation if they're less familiar with sleep medicine.

“Ideally, you should spend a third of your life sleeping. We all do it, but so little is known about it, and so many people have difficulties,” says Dr. Alkins. “The thing that I find gratifying about this work is that you can help people enjoy life better and perform better at work.”

For more information about Crouse Sleep Services, call 470-7440.