

Normal



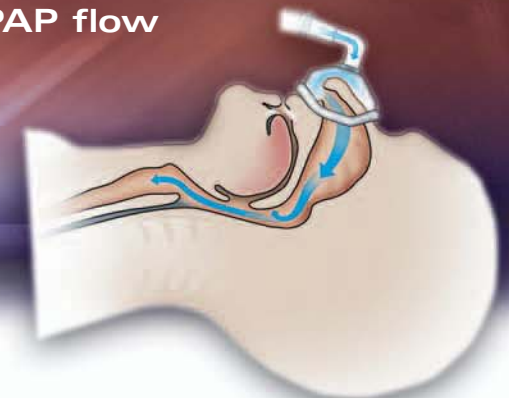
Apnea



Snoring



PAP flow



What is a sleep disorder?

If sleepiness is interfering with your daily routines or activities, you may have a sleep disorder. There are a number of different kinds of sleep disorders including: narcolepsy (excessive sleepiness during the day); restless leg syndrome (unpleasant sensations in the legs usually at night); and insomnia (poor quality sleep due to difficulty falling asleep).

The sleep disorder that is associated with stroke is called sleep apnea.

What is sleep apnea?

An apnea is a Greek term that actually means without breath. You may have Sleep Apnea Syndrome if you are sleeping and you stop breathing for 10 seconds or more. People with sleep apnea syndrome may stop breathing hundreds of times a night without even being aware of it. It is estimated up to 80% of sleep apnea patients are undiagnosed.

The most common type of sleep apnea is obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). OSA happens when the patient's airway is blocked by soft tissues of the upper airway relaxing. Those tissues then collapse and block the airway stopping the air from getting into the lungs. Most people with sleep apnea do not have breathing problems during the day.

Sleep apnea is most common in middle age men between the ages of 35 and 70. More than half of the sleep apnea patients are also overweight. More than half of the people who have stroke also suffer from sleep apnea.

What are the symptoms of sleep apnea?

- > Waking up frequently during the night, gasping for breath
- > Loud snoring
- > Excessive daytime sleepiness
- > Short attention spans
- > Morning headaches
- > Memory loss
- > Nightmares

How is sleep apnea related to stroke?

Although there are many jokes about snoring, sleep apnea is no laughing matter. It causes oxygen levels to drop dangerously low. Sleep apnea can also cause or increase a high blood pressure problem. Low oxygen levels and high blood pressure may lead to a stroke or heart attack.

How does sleep apnea effect high blood pressure?

Approximately 35% of people with high blood pressure have sleep apnea. During healthy sleep, your blood pressure lowers. People with sleep apnea tend to experience higher blood pressure because they aren't getting enough oxygen during sleep. Instead of healthy restful sleep, sleep apnea sufferers put added stress on their heart and circulatory system, leading to increased blood pressure affecting their body both night and day.

How is sleep apnea diagnosed?

Loud snoring and feeling very tired during the day are the most common symptoms. Usually sleep apnea symptoms are recognized by a spouse or other person who observes (and is often disturbed by) the sleeper's nighttime symptoms. It is important the patient's sleep partner is able to describe the snoring or breathing practices for the sleep specialist. Once the sleep apnea is suspected, a sleep specialist can perform a sleep study to determine if you have sleep apnea.

How is sleep apnea treated?

In cases some sleep apnea is caused by sleeping position, treatment may consist of keeping the sleeper from turning onto his or her back. Pinning an object (such as a tennis ball) to pajamas, can be an effective method to keep the sleeping patient from rolling onto his or her back.

For mild cases of sleep apnea, the following lifestyle changes may also be helpful:

- > **Weight loss**
- > **Avoidance of alcohol**
- > **Avoidance of sleeping medications**

The most common treatment for sleep apnea is Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP). With this type of treatment, a bedside device gently delivers pressurized air through a small mask or nasal pillow system. This pressure acts like an "air splint" to keep your upper airway open and help prevent apneas.

In some cases of sleep apnea, surgery to remove the extra throat tissue may help keep the airway open.

What should I do if I have a sleep disorder?

If you are concerned about sleep apnea or any sleep disorders you are experiencing, ask your doctor for more information. You may also contact a sleep disorder specialist in your area. These specialists can determine whether you need testing.

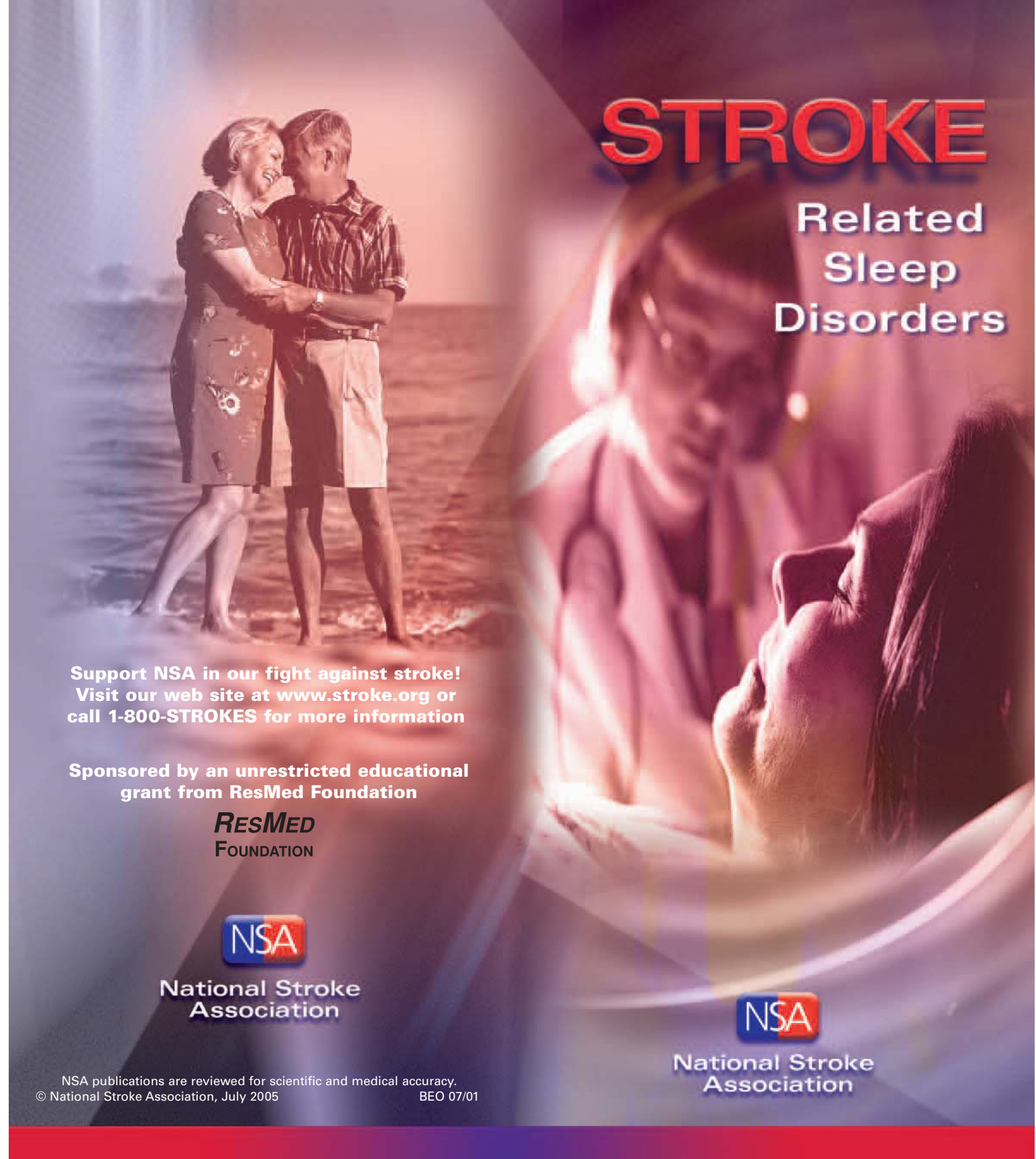
Treating sleep apnea can improve your daily life and may reduce your stroke risk. Getting a good night's sleep will not only make you feel physically and emotionally better, but will also help you to have the active lifestyle you desire.

Know the symptoms of stroke

- > **Sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body**
- > **Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding**
- > **Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes**
- > **Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination**
- > **Sudden severe headache with no known cause**

For more information contact:

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9707 East Easter Lane
Englewood, CO 80012-3747
1-800-STROKES (800-787-6537)
www.stroke.org



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