

How to Detect Sleep Apnea in Children

A child's performance at school is one of the many facets of life that are affected by sleep apnea. Hyperactivity and other undesirable behavior could be due to the quality of sleep your child experiences. Children want to do the best they can and they likely have no idea how much their sleep has to do with the way they feel on a daily basis.

What is sleep apnea and what are the symptoms?

Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) is when the airflow becomes obstructed or blocked by the tongue during your sleep. Oxygen levels become lowered from the lack of oxygen. When the oxygen level in the brain is decreased enough, your child may wake up with a gasp, the obstruction clears, and the process starts all over again.

You may hear pauses, snorts, gaps in breathing, or a lack of breathing at moments. Loud snoring is one of the most obvious symptoms of children with sleep apnea or difficulty breathing during sleep. The official journal of the American College of Chest Physicians found that kids who sleep loudly are twice as likely to have learning problems. The repeatedly low blood oxygen levels of someone with sleep apnea has an effect on their cardiovascular health.

A person with OSA will exude depression, reduced ability to concentrate, daytime sleepiness, and possibly irritability. Your child may experience excessive sweating during sleep due to the strain of trying to breathe. When the symptoms are not as severe, the condition is referred to as Upper Airway Resistance Syndrome (UARS)

It's best to consult with a professional to know for sure what your child's condition may be. A child experiencing OSA will exude symptoms such as, bedwetting, hyperactivity, and difficulty focusing at school. What is going on in your child's body when they're experiencing sleep apnea? The brain may not be properly sending the signals to the muscles that control breathing. Conditions that affect the brain and injuries can exacerbate apnea.

What sleep apnea treatment entails

Untreated sleep apnea in children can result in heart, behavior, and learning issues. It is rare but possible for the condition to become life threatening. A doctor will first consult with you and your child to analyze the symptoms. Skull X-ray analysis may be used to determine the level of obstruction that occurs when your kid is sleeping. A naso-pharyngeal exam is performed with a fiber optic camera.

Treatment may also include a sleep study to monitor your child's cardiovascular health and oxygenation levels. The study is painless and done while your child is sleeping. The first treatment you receive for sleep apnea will likely be with a CPAP machine. The CPAP

machine will limit obstructions at night by delivering pressurized oxygen through a nasal mask.

There are also surgical options available to you, uvulo-palato-pharyngo-plasty (UPPP) and laser assisted uvulo-palato-plasty (LAUPP). The former option, UPPP is performed in the soft palate area of the mouth and the throat. If the use of a laser is involved in the surgery, then the procedure is LAUPP. Another solution is tightening the soft palate with a radio-frequency probe in order to reduce obstruction. Getting treated by the radio-frequency probe involves being safely and slightly sedated from light IV.

Orthognathic surgery is the primary option to take care of OSA. The procedure increases the size of your airway by repositioning the upper and lower jaw bones. This surgery ensures that your teeth meet up as they should and corrects a misaligned jaw. A person with jaws that don't meet correctly could consider orthognathic surgery. Jaws can become this way from growing at different rates.

You can take note of a few simple things to determine if your child's jaws are out of alignment. Consider if your child is having difficulty swallowing, chewing food, speech problems, protruding jaw, breathing issues, or chronic jaw pain. These symptoms can occur from birth or gradually develop throughout life.

Who is affected by sleep apnea?

Anyone is subject to sleep apnea. A child who is overweight or has a neuromuscular deficit may be experiencing sleep apnea, because they have enlarged adenoids and tonsils. The tonsils and adenoids can be removed through a surgical procedure (T&A). Abnormalities in the tongue and jaw can also lead to a child having sleep apnea.

Most medical plans offer coverage that will help you get the condition diagnosed and treated. The pre-treatment consultation process is a perfect opportunity to ask questions about available treatments. When you choose to have orthognathic surgery, the X-rays are used to create 3D models showing how the surgery will be performed and gives you the expected results.

Where can you get sleep apnea treated?

What is the best solution for your child's sleep apnea? You can get help directly from a doctor that has experience with alleviating OSA. Orthognathic surgery is an excellent solution to correct the problem. Some hospitals have 15% of their child patients undergo this jaw surgery. Not only does the surgery prevent the airway from being obstructed, it gives your child a balanced jaw line that make the teeth fit together properly.

It is possible for many children to have sleep apnea and not know it. If your child has the symptoms of sleep apnea, schedule a consultation today to see if orthognathic surgery is best. Dr. Jamali is an experienced doctor ready to help you find the best solution at his Oral

& Maxillofacial Surgery of New York clinic. You can even view what the aesthetic results of the surgery will be for your child using 3D imaging. It's best to get a professional involved because your child may or may not communicate that they're not sleeping well or having other problems.

This plastic surgery is a one time occurrence that gets rid of this condition for the long term. There is no need to add to the surgery or follow up after it is completed. If your child is using a CPAP machine, allow your child to experience the freedom of no longer needing it. A good night's rest is essential to your child's health. A host of problems can be prevented now and in the future by choosing a procedure that completely resolves OSA.