

It Pays to Sleep

By Craig Schwimmer, MD, MPH, FACS

April 13, 2009

Sleep Loss Costs Economy up to \$15 Billion Each Year According to the Better Sleep Council



(HealthNewsDigest.com) - Now more than ever, Americans need their shut-eye. Unfortunately, sleep is usually one of the first things people scrimp on when time is short and stress is high. In a turbulent economy, nearly 30 percent of Americans lose sleep at least a few nights per week, according to a 2009 Sleep in America poll by the National Sleep Foundation (NSF). Lack of sleep means more than fatigue and grouchy countenance: obesity, hypertension, increased risk for stroke and diabetes, cardiac stress,

depression, loss of libido, erectile dysfunction, short term memory loss have all been associated with sleep deprivation.

“Millions of Americans are feeling the financial crunch,” said Craig Schwimmer, MD, MPH, FACS, founder and medical director of the Snoring Center, a medical practice dedicated to treating snoring and sleep apnea. “As a result, sleep is no longer a priority, set aside in favor of burning the midnight oil. Unfortunately, this rarely helps: the NSF found 51 percent of the American workplace reports that daytime fatigue interferes with the amount of work they get done.”

Economic consequences of sleep loss cost the country an estimated \$15 billion a year in increased health care costs, automobile accidents, workplace accidents, and decreased job performance, according to the Better Sleep Council, a non-profit organization dedicated to educating the public on the importance of sleep. Every day, nearly 80,000 drivers fall asleep at the wheel, leading to 100,000 crashes and 8,000 deaths per year, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Over half of American adults – nearly 110 million licensed drivers – have driven when drowsy at least one within the past year; 28 percent of surveyed adults admitted to nodding off or falling asleep behind the wheel.

According to the NSF 2009 Sleep in American Poll, only 28 percent of Americans get the recommended eight hours of sleep, a drop of 10 percent since 2001. Sleep loss is cumulative, too: losing one hour of sleep per night for a week is as bad as going an entire night without sleep.

Sleep loss is especially detrimental to those suffering from disruptive snoring or sleep apnea, as they are not getting restful sleep to begin with. Addressing sleep issues is critical, as what may appear as innocuous snoring can in reality be sleep apnea, a potentially-fatal condition. Sleep apnea is characterized by loud, habitual snoring and stop-breathing spells. Patients often complain of poor sleep quality, excessive daytime sleepiness and morning headache, among other symptoms. Estimated to affect up to 10 percent of adult males and up to 4 percent of adult females, sleep apnea is common in overweight people and causes significant respiratory and cardiac strain.

“Sleep apnea disrupts sleep because people with sleep apnea actually wake up many times during the night (unbeknownst to them), and therefore do not get normal, restorative sleep,” said Dr. Schwimmer.

While maintaining a healthy weight and lifestyle can vastly improve sleep apnea, for most patients, medical treatment is required. Today, minimally-invasive procedures such as the Pillar Procedure are making snoring treatments quicker, easier, and more permanent than ever before.

“The Pillar Procedure is a minimally-invasive treatment for snoring and mild to moderate sleep apnea that stiffens the soft palate by placing small implants inside, thus reducing palatal vibration,” said Dr. Schwimmer, who is the nation’s leading provider of the Pillar Procedure. “Its combination of comfort, convenience and efficacy has revolutionized procedural treatment of snoring and mild to moderate sleep apnea.”

Even in a shaky economy, the Pillar Procedure is affordable, with most patients spending approximately \$3,000 for five inserts. Considering the costs (both financial and personal) of “traditional” treatment options, the benefits of minimally invasive, well-tolerated treatments that present no compliance issues are well worth the investment. Additionally, the physical and emotional price snorers and their loved ones pay on a nightly basis, not to mention money spent on over-the-counter sleeping remedies – many which only contribute to the problem – make the benefits of the Pillar Procedure worth the expense.

Whether diet and exercise or medical treatment is required to ensure adequate sleep, the point is to prioritize healthy rest. Sleep is no longer a luxury for the leisure set; it is a necessity that a stressed society must afford.

About The Snoring Center

The Snoring CenterSM is a unique medical practice dedicated to the evaluation and treatment of snoring and sleep apnea with effective, minimally-invasive treatments. Founded by Craig Schwimmer, MD, MPH, FACS, a Board-Certified Otolaryngologist, it is the world's leading provider of the Pillar Procedure and offers additional office-based treatments for sleep-disordered breathing.

Snoring can be indicative of serious health problems; even mild snoring can disrupt sleep, depriving snorers and their bed partners of the rest they need. Lack of sleep can cause everything from fatigue and short tempers to decreased job performance and auto accidents. The Snoring Center specializes in minimally-invasive, out-patient treatment options, including the Pillar Procedure and turbinate coblation.

www.snoringcenter.com