

#DM2002-7

“SLEEP APNEA”

SLEEP APNEA IS A MEDICAL CONDITION WHERE A PERSON STOPS BREATHING. IT OCCURS IN OVER 10 MILLION AMERICANS, MOSTLY TARGETING MIDDLE-AGED AND OVERWEIGHT ADULT MALES.

SLEEP APNEA OCCURS WHEN THE TONGUE BLOCKS THE AIR PASSAGE, CAUSING BREATHING TO STOP. IN SEVERE CASES, IT CAN LAST UP TO 3 MINUTES. TREATMENTS RANGE FROM WEIGHT LOSS TO SURGERY.

ANOTHER OPTION MAY BE WEARING A SPECIAL DEVICE IN THE MOUTH. ACCORDING TO THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION, A DENTIST CREATED AN APPLIANCE MADE FROM SPECIAL PLASTIC MATERIAL. IT WAS DESIGNED TO INCREASE THE SPACE IN THE THROAT ALLOWING LESS BLOCKAGE OF THE AIRWAY. MANY PATIENTS EXPERIENCED A 50 PERCENT REDUCTION OF SLEEP APNEA EPISODES EACH NIGHT.

IF YOU FEEL FATIGUED OR WAKE UP FREQUENTLY DURING THE NIGHT, YOU MAY HAVE SLEEP APNEA. TALK TO YOUR DENTIST ABOUT YOUR SYMPTOMS, HE OR SHE MAY BE ABLE TO HELP YOU, OR CAN REFER YOU TO A SPECIALIST IN SLEEP DISORDERS.

FOR THE ADA DENTAL MINUTE, I'M DR. MARIA LOPEZ HOWELL.

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