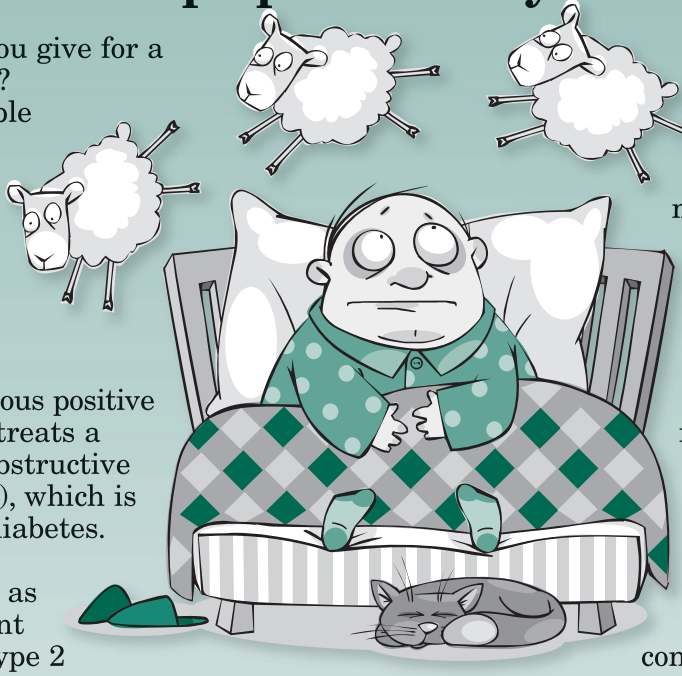
Diabetes and sleep apnea closely linked



What would you give for a good night's sleep?

For many people with diabetes, the answer lies in CPAP, a small device that sits on the bedside table and delivers pressurized air through a mask.

CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) treats a condition called obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), which is closely linked to diabetes.

"Some recent studies show that as many as 70 percent of patients with type 2 diabetes will have OSA," said **Jeremy Tabak, M.D.**, a pulmonary specialist who is medical director of the Baptist Hospital Sleep Laboratory and Baptist Sleep Center at Galloway.

In sleep apnea, a flap of muscle closes over the breathing pathway when a person lies down. Unable to breathe, the brain sends a signal to wake the patient. This happens over and over again all night long. "In a sleep study, we'll see patients stop breathing 30 times or more an hour," said Dr. Tabak. "The result is a poor night of sleep and drowsiness during the day,"

Dr. Tabak said that people usually are unaware this is happening, but the person sharing the bedroom knows. "Sleep apnea usually is accompanied by loud snoring."

The CPAP device delivers a measured flow of air, customized for each patient, through a nose mask. The pressure keeps the flap of muscle from closing, eliminating the snoring and helping the patient sleep through the night.

"We wouldn't order a sleep study just because someone is diabetic, but we would question the patient and bed partner about snoring, daytime sleepiness and nocturnal choking or gasping. Our level of suspicion for sleep apnea in patients with type 2 diabetes is high, especially if the patient is obese."

Dr. Tabak said that patients who use CPAP can expect some improvement in blood glucose control and blood pressure.

"CPAP also results in improved cardiac function. It helps patients with congestive heart failure, helps to control cardiac arrhythmias, especially atrial fibrillation, and improves overall mortality."

The process begins with a visit to a doctor specializing in sleep disorders. Ask your family doctor, or contact the Baptist Health Physician Referral Service at **786-596-6557** or *Referral@BaptistHealth*.net, or visit *BaptistHealth.net* for an online referral.

After an office visit and exam, the doctor may send the patient for a sleep study, which requires an overnight stay in a sleep laboratory. The results of the sleep study will determine whether the patient has OSA and, if so, what CPAP pressure is needed to treat it.

OSA is such a common problem that Baptist Health has eight sleep centers conveniently located throughout the service area. Most are equipped like hotel rooms, with queen-sized beds to make the experience as comfortable as possible. For a list of the sleep centers and more information, go to *BaptistSleep.com*.

Some patients take to CPAP right away, but for others it may take weeks to get accustomed to using the device and some give up in frustration.

"We try to intervene in the first few days to eliminate barriers to CPAP use," Dr. Tabak said. "Sometimes this involves refitting the mask, treating nasal symptoms or teaching them relaxation techniques.

"When patients are working with physicians with an interest in sleep medicine, they are more likely to be successfully treated."