



Donna Victor

Polysomnographic technologist Manny Rodriguez attaches sensors to KiKi Bochi before her sleep study.

Sweet dreams

What's keeping you from getting a healthy dose of sleep?

By KiKi Bochi

I could have brought a teddy bear to my sleep study. Instead I showed up with my pillow and pajamas, feeling a bit nervous. The whole idea of someone putting me to bed and watching me sleep, like a little kid, was a bit uncomfortable.

I shouldn't have worried. Staff members at eight Baptist Sleep Centers in Miami-

Dade and Broward go out of their way to put patients at ease. The rooms are private and comfortable, with a big-screen television, Wi-Fi, queen-size bed and quality pillows. The Centers even provide a bathrobe and continental breakfast. It was like checking into a hotel.

My reluctance, it turns out, was quite common. "A lot of people who are advised to do a sleep study don't want

to," said pulmonologist Jeremy Tabak, M.D., medical director of Baptist Sleep Center at Galloway and president of the South Miami Hospital Medical Staff. "They worry about the camera, or the monitoring, or sleeping away from home. But when you do it, you see it's not intimidating."

Sleep studies help determine what is preventing a solid night's rest, essential

to good health. The studies can reveal if you have restless leg syndrome or even sleepwalking. However, they most commonly are used to diagnose obstructive sleep apnea, in which the airway collapses during sleep and interrupts breathing.

A serious condition affecting more than 12 million Americans, sleep apnea has been linked to an increased risk of heart attack, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity and mental health issues.

When I told one of my doctors that I am fatigued from the time I wake up, she suggested a number of years ago that I undergo a sleep study. I snore — and loudly. My children can hear it from the next room. Sometimes my snorts are so loud, they wake me up.

So why did it take me so long to heed my doctor's advice? Very simply, I didn't want to be told I needed to wear a mask at night and be connected to a continuous positive airway pressure machine, or CPAP, to help my breathing. Another common fear.

"No one wants to be told they have sleep apnea," said Manny Rodriguez, the polysomnographic technologist who hooked me up for my study at the Galloway Center. "But the great thing is, we can treat this condition and make your life so much better."

With 15 sensors attached to my head and additional sensors on my legs and chest, I got into bed. Although I could barely feel them, the sensors would monitor my breathing, oxygen levels and heart rate during my sleep cycle. I worried about how I would go to the bathroom during the night, but the monitoring system was easily detached. And while it

was initially a little difficult to fall asleep, morning came quickly. I was unhooked and sent home.

I'm not sure why I was surprised when Dr. Tabak called with my diagnosis: severe sleep apnea. In my sleep, I had stopped breathing an average of 44 times per hour, and my oxygen level dropped to 60 percent of what it should be. I couldn't achieve deep, restorative sleep because I kept waking up to restart my breathing. In a nutshell, I needed a CPAP.

"This is not at all uncommon," Dr. Tabak reassured me. Sleep apnea is generally diagnosed more often in men, but as women age their rates double, he said. "Sleep tends to get worse as we get older, and in women it gets dramatically worse after menopause," Dr. Tabak explained.

A lot of things that affect women's sleep can be hormonal, and that should be addressed with your primary care physician or gynecologist. But breathing is Dr. Tabak's specialty, and mine needed help. I returned to the Center to be monitored while sleeping with a CPAP. (By the way, the machine did not make noise, the mask was reasonably comfortable and I slept very well.)

Overall a happy ending, even without a teddy bear. I am now looking forward to better sleep, losing weight and feeling more energetic. And all I had to do was take my doctor's advice and get a sleep study.

In addition to Baptist Sleep Centers at Galloway, Sunset, Miami Lakes and Pembroke Pines, sleep studies are performed at Baptist, Homestead, Mariners and South Miami Hospitals.

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— *Jeremy Tabak, M.D., medical director of Baptist Sleep Center at Galloway*

WONDERING IF YOU NEED A SLEEP STUDY?

Take the online sleep quiz at BaptistSleep.com and discuss the results with your doctor, who must provide a prescription for a study. Go to the same website to learn about the effects of sleep deprivation on heart health, metabolism and weight, disease prevention, learning and memory, and mental health.