

# HEALTH MATTERS

## Restless Nights May Signal Sleep Apnea Disorder

OHSU doctor addresses impacts

BY MARCUS WHITE  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

If you find yourself waking up in the wee hours of the night, or tired and sleepy in the morning, chances are you could be suffering from sleep apnea.

According to the National Institutes of Health, sleep apnea is a common problem. Although it can impact just about anyone's sleep patterns, the most common person at risk is an overweight male over the age of forty. Regardless, sleep apnea can affect anyone at any age, including children.

Dr. Holger Link of Oregon Health and Science University describes sleep apnea as a problem where there is abnormal pattern in breathing.

"It has to do with the fact that as you get older all the tissues in the body become a little more loose and there is a limitation of airflow through the airways," he said.

Link explains that there are two common sleep apnea disorders that exist. "There is the central sleep apnea where the patient does not make an effort to breathe. The brain does not give a signal to breathe."

The other type is obstructive sleep apnea and that is where there is a blockage of the airway. This is usually where the soft tissue in the rear of the throat collapses and closes during sleep, commonly known as snoring.

"Snoring," according to Link, "is the most common symptom. There are many more people who snore without sleep apnea. Sometimes we see that the bed partner will be the one who brings the patient to the clinic because the snoring is so loud."

The NIH also reports that sleep apnea that is not treated can cause high blood pressure, memory loss, weight gain, headaches, and other cardiovascular problems. Also,



The gurgling, sawing and choking types of snoring from sleep apnea means he's finally getting some sleep. But the noise keeps her awake.

sleep apnea that goes untreated can be the cause of job impairment and motor vehicle accidents.

Fortunately, sleep apnea can be treated and diagnosed according to Link. "There are two main options," he explains, "one is where you wear a mask at night. You wear it over your nose and mouth and a little shoe box device goes over your nose and it provides air for the nasal passage."

The other treatment is for the patient to lose weight.

Frances Johnson thought that she had sleep apnea because she felt tired in the mornings. As a result, she decided to see her physician. Frances said that the doctor wanted her to take a laboratory test because she had some of the symptoms.

"I went in about 9 p.m.," she said. "Then they hook you up to all of these (devices). During the night,

they wake you up and ask you all types of questions."

Frances says that you are tested to see if you stop breathing. "Before you are able to go to sleep, they have you put a mask on just in case they find out you do stop breathing during the night," she said.

Says Link, "While patients are in a sleep laboratory, we measure over 14 different parameters for sleeping. We measure the chest wall and

air coming in and out of the nose, heartbeat, and activity of leg movement. If it is abnormal the first time around, they will get fitted for a proper mask." Link says they also test the EEG (electroencephalogram) to measure brain wave activity, rapid eye movement, and other body functions.

According to the American Sleep Apnea Association, children who have this problem can also show signs of hyperactivity. The ASPA reports that because of the lack of awareness by the public and healthcare professionals, the vast majority remain undiagnosed. Therefore, many are not treated despite the fact that sleep apnea can impose serious consequences on a person's health.

When asked about what is being done about sleep apnea, Link says that there are national sleep foundations that provide good resources for the public. He says that the best way to inform people is by "educating the public."

## Promoting Water Safety for Kids

Olympic athlete joins effort

(AP)--USA Swimming is teaming with an array of partners -- local governments, corporations, youth and ethnic organizations -- to expand learn-to-swim programs nationwide, many of them targeted at inner-city minorities.

One of the key participants is black freestyle star Cullen Jones, who hopes to boost his role-model status by winning a medal this summer at the Beijing Olympics.

USA Swimming's motives are twofold, executive director Chuck Wielgus said.

"It's just the right thing to do -- making an effort so every kid can be water-safe," he said. "And quite frankly it's about performance. We're something of a niche sport and for us to remain relevant, considering the changing demographics of the population, it's important we get more kids involved at the mouth of the pipeline."

A recent study found that 31 percent of the white children could not swim safely, compared to 58

percent of African-American children and 56 percent for Hispanic children.

The lead researcher, Professor Richard Irwin, said one key finding was the influence of parents' attitudes and abilities. If a parent couldn't swim, as was far more likely in minority families than white families, or if the parent felt swimming was dangerous, then the child was far less likely to learn how to swim.

Irwin said this means learn-to-swim programs in minority communities should reach out to parents.

The minority swimming gap has deep roots in America's racial history. For decades during the 20th century, many pools were segregated, and relatively few were built to serve black communities.

John Cruzat, USA Swimming's diversity specialist, said these inequalities were compounded by a widespread misperception -- fueled by flawed academic studies -- that blacks' swimming ability was compromised by an innate deficit of buoyancy.

"There are people who still give credence to these stereotypes, even in the black and Hispanic commu-



USA Swimmer Cullen Jones helps Tavion Traynham with the kick board while giving swim lessons to six eight-year-olds at a YMCA in Omaha, Neb.

nity," said Cruzat, who wants to break the cycle that passes negative attitudes about swimming from one black generation to another.

"These long-held beliefs are still so potent," he said. "If you don't teach your children to swim, you're putting your grandchildren at risk."

Cruzat was pleased by one finding in the new study -- that most black and Hispanic children do not disdain swimming as a "white sport." The study also found that swimming ability, regardless of race,

increased in relation to parents' income and education.

Jones still hears skeptical comments sometimes from adults in the black community, even from some of his relatives -- but he sees little hesitation in the children he mentors in the pool.

"I've done lessons with white and black kids -- there's no kid out there who doesn't like jumping into a pool," he said. "When you're 6, you are fearless. That's the time to teach them."

## HEALTH WATCH

**Peer-to-Peer Recovery** -- Peer-to-peer education recovery is a free nine-week course for mental health patients. Mentors who are recovering from mental illness are trained to teach coping strategies to others. For more information, call 503-228-5692.

**Bereavement Support Groups** -- Free, safe confidential group meetings for those who have experienced the death of a loved one offered on various nights and locations. For information and registration, call 503-215-4622.

**Oregon Action Internships** -- The grassroots organization Oregon Action is seeking an intern who is committed to improving healthcare for non-English speaking patients in northeast Portland. This is a non-paid internship with college credit availability. Call 503-828-6588 ext. 5.

**Stop Smoking!** -- Thursdays, starting May 8 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., a four-week quit smoking program offers the tools to for real success minimize the risk of relapse; the class has a \$95 fee. To register, call 503-335-3500.

**Women's Wellness: Breast Health** -- Saturday, May 10, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., at Legacy Good Samaritan, Building Two, lower level, 1040 N.W. 22nd Ave., a free event features a catered brunch, guest speakers and booths with topics including cancer genetics, breast imaging, bone density and more. To register, call 503-335-3500.

**Newborn Care for Multiples** -- Saturday, May 11 from 1 to 5 p.m., this class will prepare new parents coping skills and routines to deal with multiples; \$45 per couple. To register, call 503-574-6595.

**Feeding for Multiples** -- Sunday, May 11 from 5 to 8 p.m., this class is designed to cover the basics of breast- and bottle-feeding multiples; \$40 per couple. To register, call 503-574-6595.

**Josiah Hill III Clinic's Annual Leaving a Legacy** -- Thursday, May 15 the fundraiser featuring a social and silent auction from 5:30 to 6:45 p.m. and the dinner and program with keynote speaker Charles Jordan from 6:45 to 8:30 p.m. funds will benefit the clinic in support of those who suffer from lead poisoning. RSVP by calling 503-334-9694.

**Big Brother & Big Sisters-To-Be** -- Saturday, May 17 from 10 to 11 a.m., this special sibling class is for ages 3-6, to help prepare them for their new role as a big brother or sister; parents must be present; \$20 fee (2-adults, 1-child); to register call 503-574-6595.

## Rabies-infected Bat Found in Multnomah County

Pet-vaccine warning issued

(AP)--The Oregon State Public Health Laboratory has confirmed that a bat in Multnomah County was infected with rabies. The bat was found by a resident in an inner

southeast Portland home last week.

The report is prompting public health officials to remind people to avoid bats and to vaccinate their pets against rabies, particularly cats.

"People can do three things to protect themselves and their pets from rabies," said Emilio DeBess, D.V.M., public health veterinarian

in the Oregon Department of Human Services. "Use screens in your windows, never handle bats, and make sure your cats and dogs are up to date on their rabies vaccines."

Rabies is a viral disease that affects the nervous system after exposure to a rabid animal. Exposure is usually through a bite but can

also occur through scratches and saliva contact with broken skin. It is almost always fatal once symptoms begin.

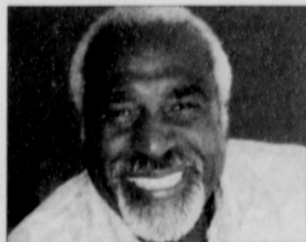
Bats play an important role in the ecosystem, especially in controlling insects and aiding agriculture, DeBess said, but a small percentage can carry rabies.

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