



Prevention and health guidelines for **safe driving**

Disturbed sleep patterns

Disturbed sleep patterns



Amongst the various problems which can affect our sleep, apart from the well-known phenomenon of insomnia, we must not forget to mention **OSAS** - Obstructive Sleep Apnea Syndrome.

Studies carried out in the EU have shown that OSAS is one of the most significant contributory factors to road accidents in particular among professional drivers.

Important facts about OSAS

OSAS is a respiratory disturbance whose effects are felt only during sleep and whose symptoms are **repeated episodes**, which last around ten seconds, of **complete** (apnea) or **partial** (ipopnea) obstruction of the upper respiratory tract.

This interruption to the breathing cycle puts a strain on the respiratory system, with knock-on effects on the heart and the blood circulation, with the effect of possibly reducing the oxygen supply to the various organs, and a break-up of the sleep pattern which becomes unstable (partial waking) and less refreshing.

When should you suspect you suffer from OSAS?

This syndrome shows up via a range of symptoms which are observable during night-time sleep and during daytime activities, and is connected to certain physical characteristics related to weight and other anatomical features

Answer these questions about symptoms due to OSAS.



Has anyone been telling you that you snore for the last six months?	Yes, often	Sometimes	No
Has anyone told you that, whilst you are asleep, you stop breathing for some seconds?	Yes, often	Sometimes	No
If you snore, do you sometimes wake up feeling suffocated?	Yes, often	Sometimes	No
Do you have periods of drowsiness during the day?	Yes, often	Sometimes	No

If many of your answers come under a **red or yellow traffic light** you should go and get the causes of your OSAS checked out and tell your GP about it.

Answer these questions about physical characteristics related to OSAS.



Is your body mass index greater than 29?	Yes	No
If you are man, is your neck measurement greater than 43 cm, and if you are a woman, greater than 41?	Yes	No
Are you aware of having an anatomical condition of the jaws, the nose, the mouth or throat, which could cause a narrowing of the airways?	Yes	No

Excess weight and having a thicker than average neck show you have an excessive amount of fat which can help to bring about OSAS.

The symptoms of OSAS

Amongst the **symptoms of OSAS**, snoring and daytime drowsiness are the most obvious but they aren't the only ones; **other nighttime and daytime symptoms** are shown in the table below.

Nighttime symptoms

Snoring: the noise we make during our sleep originates from the passage of turbulent air, as it passes through the rear of the mouth the nose and the throat.

Sleep apnea: interruption to breathing during sleep which can last from a few seconds up to more than a minute.

Choking: episodes of suffocation which cause a sudden awakening and wheezing.

Nighttime breathing difficulties (dispnea): reduced air supply during sleep.

Tossing and turning: excessive movement of the body or legs during sleep.

Nicturia: The need to get up and urinate during the night.

Night sweats: excessive sweating during the night.

Heartburn: acid reflux reaching the throat and the oral cavity during sleep.

Daytime symptoms

Drowsiness

Asthenia (weakness)

Morning headaches

Reduced concentration

Reduced libido or impotence

Reduced alertness

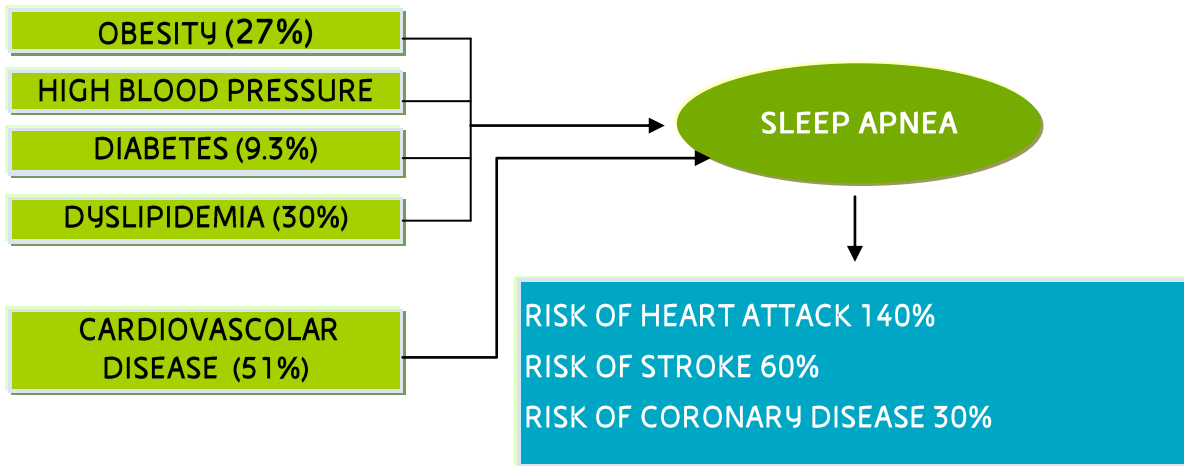
Depression

Personality changes

Deterioration in manual dexterity



Medical conditions associated with OSAS

The diagram below shows how diagnoses for OSAS are often associated with other medical conditions.



OSAS Can be treated!

OSAS can be treated in a variety of ways.

Health guidelines	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lose weight; • Don't drink alcohol in the evening; • Be careful with certain types of medication. To find out which medicines cause drowsiness consult the table entitled "Are you on medication?"; • Try to avoid sleeping in the supine position.
Positioning of dental braces	
	<p>These are recommended when your sleep problems are connected to an under-slung jaw.</p>

Use of a CPAP device (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure)



This is recommended for a moderate to severe condition. It is a portable respirator which blows air into your upper airways, keeping them open and helping to prevent snoring and apnea.