

## Are You Sleeping Right?

More than 18 million Americans suffer from a sleep condition called sleep apnea. Sleep apnea is a disorder in which breathing is briefly and repeatedly interrupted during sleep. The word "apnea" literally means "without breath."

Chronic snoring is a common indicator of sleep apnea. Other symptoms can include:

- difficulty concentrating
- depression
- irritability
- daytime sleepiness
- sexual dysfunction
- learning and memory difficulties
- falling asleep while at work, on the phone, or driving
- weight gain
- unrefreshing sleep.



If you suspect you may have sleep apnea, the first thing to do is see your doctor. Bring a record of your sleep, fatigue levels throughout the day, and any other

symptoms you might be having. Also take an updated list of your medications, including over-the-counter medications.

If you're diagnosed with sleep apnea, lifestyle changes can be effective. **Here are tips that may help reduce apnea severity:**

- Lose weight. If you're overweight, this is the most important action you can take to cure your sleep apnea.
- Avoid alcohol. Alcohol causes frequent nighttime awakenings and makes the upper airway breathing muscles relax.
- Quit smoking. Cigarette smoking worsens swelling in the upper airway, making apnea (and snoring) worse.
- Try lying on your side instead of your back.

For more information, visit the National Sleep Foundation, [www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org) or the American Sleep Apnea Association at [www.sleepapnea.org](http://www.sleepapnea.org).

## Know the Symptoms of Strep Throat

During the colder months, many people suffer from scratchy, sore throats, but some have more than just a sore throat – they have strep throat.



Strep throat is an infection that is caused by streptococcus bacteria. It's common among children and teens. **The symptoms of strep throat include:**

- fever
- stomach pain
- red, swollen tonsils
- difficulty swallowing
- red and white patches on the throat
- headache
- tender or swollen glands in the neck
- loss of appetite
- rash
- nausea
- general discomfort or ill feeling.

If you or a member of your family have these symptoms, it's important to have it checked by a doctor who can test to see if it's strep throat. Strep throat is contagious when symptoms are present and until you've been treated with an antibiotic for one to three days.

**To relieve throat pain, try these tips:**

- Take ibuprofen or acetaminophen.
- Gargle with warm salt water several times a day.
- For adults and teens, suck on throat lozenges, hard candy, or pieces of ice.
- Eat soft foods or soup.
- Drink cool drinks or warm liquids. (Avoid orange juice, grapefruit juice, lemonade, or other acidic beverages since they may irritate the throat.)
- Suck on a popsicle. **Tip:** After you get well, replace your toothbrush since the bacteria can live on the brush and reinfect you.

For more information, visit MedlinePlus at [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus) or the American Academy of Family Physicians at [www.familydoctor.org](http://www.familydoctor.org).

## Protect Your Vision

Protecting your eyesight is important for maintaining your health and well-being. If you experience any changes in your vision, it's important to see your eye doctor as soon as possible.

**Here are some signs that you need your vision checked:**

- Trouble adjusting to a dark room
- Difficulty focusing on near or distant objects
- Unusual sensitivity to light or glare that causes squinting or blinking
- Red rimmed, encrusted, or swollen eye lids
- Pain in or around your eyes
- Double vision
- Dark spot in the center of your sight
- Lines or edges that appear wavy or distorted
- Dry eyes or burning
- Excessive tearing or watery eyes.

Source: Prevent Blindness America, [www.preventblindness.org](http://www.preventblindness.org)



## Osteoporosis: Protect Your Bones

Research at Columbia University shows that two percent of 18- to 30-year-old women have osteoporosis. Another 18 percent have osteopenia, or low bone density. **To prevent osteoporosis:**

- Consume three calcium-rich products a day such as nonfat milk, fortified orange juice, low-fat cheese, and broccoli.
- Avoid high-protein diets. They increase blood acidity. The body compensates by pulling calcium from the bones.
- Eat fruits and vegetables. Doctors say these foods help neutralize acid in the blood so less calcium has to be drawn from the bones.
- Exercise. Bones benefit most from jogging, jumping rope, step aerobics, and especially strength training.
- Women should get plenty of extra calcium while pregnant or nursing.
- Don't smoke.

For more information, visit the National Osteoporosis Foundation at [www.nof.org](http://www.nof.org).