

## **SLEEP APNEA PATIENT EDUCATION**

### **What is Obstructive Sleep Apnea?**

Sleep apnea is when a person stops breathing for 10-30 seconds at a time while sleeping. This wakes you up many times during the night. If left untreated, obstructive sleep apnea can cause serious and even life-threatening concerns such as heart attack, respiratory arrest, high blood pressure, depression, and a shorter life expectancy.

### **What causes sleep apnea?**

Obstructive sleep apnea is when your breathing stops because something is blocking air from coming into your body. When you try to breathe, you can't get enough air because of the blockage. This blockage might be from your tongue, fatty tissue in your neck or throat, enlarged tonsils or uvula (the piece of flesh that you see hanging down in the back of your throat).

### **How do I know if I have sleep apnea?**

Before your surgery you were asked some questions that provided us with a score. Your sleep apnea score showed a medium to high risk for obstructive sleep apnea. The symptoms of sleep apnea occur while you're sleeping and your bed partner may notice it first. You or your partner may notice you have heavy snoring or long pauses in your breathing during sleep. You may notice feeling tired or irritable during the day.

### **What do I need to do when I go home after surgery?**

Sleep apnea can get worse for 1-2 days after having surgery. This is due to the medicine given to you to put you to sleep for your operation and also from the medicine given to you after your surgery for pain or vomiting. For the next few days:

- Sleep on your side (unless told not to by your doctor).
- Avoid alcohol.
- Use caution with any medicine that makes you sleepy (do not take more than prescribed dose).

### **What can I do to help my sleep apnea?**

- Stop all use of alcohol or sleep medicines. These relax the muscles in the back of your throat, making it harder for you to breathe.
- If you smoke, quit smoking.
- If you are overweight, lose weight.
- Sleep on your side instead of on your back.

### **Questions to Ask Your Doctor**

If you do not have a primary medical provider, please call the physician referral service at (231) 935-5886.

- Do I need a sleep study?
- What are the health risks associated with sleep apnea?
- What lifestyle changes can I make at home to help treat my sleep apnea?
- Will I need to wear a CPAP device?