

**Atrial Fibrillation** is a common heart rhythm disturbance. There are four heart chambers- two on the top and two on the bottom. Each one has to squeeze at the right time in order for things to move smoothly. In atrial fibrillation, the top chambers don't squeeze like they should and the timing becomes irregular. This allows blood to pool in the heart where it can lead to a stroke. This is commonly associated with sleep apnea.

There are two forms of sleep apnea: obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) and central sleep apnea (CSA). People can have both. OSA is a blockage of your airways that causes airflow to your lungs to stop while you are sleeping. CSA is due to a pause in your breathing from miscommunication between your brain and breathing muscles. These events repeatedly occur during the night and continue night after night, eventually affecting how your heart works.

***Treating heart failure and sleep apnea can improve the quality of a patient's life.***

**Atrial fibrillation and sleep apnea have many of the same symptoms.**

- **Waking up short of breath or catching your breath**
- **Lack of energy**
- **Shortness of breath**
- **Feeling sleepy or tired all day**
- **Some have no symptoms but find out after a stroke.**

**What should I do about it?**

**Diagnosis** - Sleep apnea is often first suspected by your family. Ask your bed partner if you snore, snort, gasp or struggle to breathe, or have pauses in breathing while you sleep. These are signs you may have sleep apnea. Let your doctor know so that they can

determine if you are at risk for sleep apnea. A sleep study is the test used to diagnose sleep apnea and other sleep conditions. These tests measure your heart rate, blood oxygen level, airflow and breathing patterns. If the results are not normal, your doctor will discuss treatment options.

**What are the treatment options?**

**Treatment may include the following:**

**CPAP or BPAP** – While wearing a mask during sleep the CPAP or BPAP machine moves air into the nasal passages at pressures high enough to allow normal breathing.

**Weight loss** – Weight loss helps to decrease the severity of sleep apnea.

**Oral device** – These devices enlarge the airway by pulling the jaw forward to allow for normal breathing.

**Surgery**– There are numerous surgical procedures to create a more open airway to improve sleep apnea.

**Why do I need to be tested and treated?**

Several research studies have shown that many patients with atrial fibrillation experience the following benefits by treating their sleep apnea:

- Decrease the night time stress on your heart from apnea events.
- Patients who have a procedure to fix their atrial fibrillation are more likely to stay in a normal rhythm if they treat their sleep apnea.
- Improves the quality of your life by relieving the symptoms of sleep apnea.

***Talk to your physician about your sleep concerns and symptoms.***