



DOWN SYNDROME PROGRAM
www.massgeneral.org/downsyndrome

Learning About Obstructive Sleep Apnea

Obstructive sleep apnea, or OSA, can cause you to have trouble breathing while you sleep. People who have Down syndrome are more likely to have OSA. In this handout, you will learn about OSA and what causes it. You will also learn why it should be treated.

WHAT IS OSA?

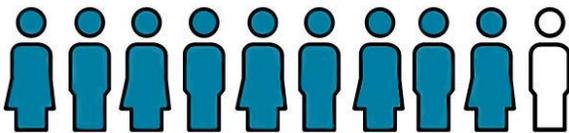
OSA stands for obstructive sleep apnea. OSA is a medical condition that causes you to have trouble breathing while you sleep.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF OSA?

- Loud snoring or noisy breathing while you sleep
- Breathing through your mouth while you sleep
- Having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep
- Not breathing while you sleep
- Trouble waking up in the morning
- Sleeping in funny positions
- Feeling sleepy or grouchy during the day
- Trouble paying attention at school or at work

HOW COMMON IS OSA?

OSA is very common in people who have Down syndrome. Up to 9 out of every 10 people who have Down syndrome will have OSA.



Up to 9 out of 10 people who have Down syndrome also have OSA.

WHAT CAUSES OSA?

- Small **airway** (path your breath takes to your lungs when you breathe)
- Larger tongue
- Lower **muscle tone** (muscles that are not as strong as others)
- More fat around the neck
- Being **overweight** or **obese** (weighing more than usual)
- Large **tonsils** or **adenoids** (glands in your throat that help protect you from germs)

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE OSA?

Doctors will do a sleep study to see if you have OSA. A **sleep study**, or **polysomnogram**, is when you stay overnight at the hospital. Doctors check your breathing while you sleep.

I HAD A SLEEP STUDY WHEN I WAS YOUNGER. WHY DO I NEED ANOTHER ONE?

You can develop OSA at any time as you get older. Having another sleep study lets doctors check if you have OSA. .

WHY SHOULD I TREAT MY OSA NOW?

Not treating your OSA can make it hard for you to remember things or focus at school or at work. It can make you more tired, depressed (sad) or worried. Not treating OSA can also cause heart problems and make it harder to lose weight.

Is there something wrong with me if I have OSA?

No. OSA is very common in people with Down syndrome. OSA is not your fault. Doctors at the Down Syndrome Program will help you learn to manage OSA so you can live a happy life and do things you enjoy.