



Catholic Healthcare West

**Ask the Expert**  
*Arizona Republic*

**Jessica Olszewski, RPSGT**

**Q: My husband snores constantly and rarely wakes rested. Could he have sleep apnea?**

**A:** If your husband snores and experiences constant daytime sleepiness, he may have sleep apnea, which is a common sleep disorder. Approximately one in four adults suffers from sleep disordered breathing, however, 85 to 90 percent are undiagnosed and untreated. The term apnea literally means without breathing. During sleep, the upper airway tissue will relax and can block your airway causing the pauses in your breathing, or apnea. This can happen hundreds of times during the night.

Sleep apnea can be life-threatening. Untreated sleep apnea puts you at higher risk for serious health problems, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, heart attack, stroke, diabetes and depression.

According to the American Sleep Association, here are a few signs and symptoms of sleep apnea:

- Excessive daytime sleepiness
- Loud, disruptive snoring
- Headaches in the morning
- Difficulty concentrating
- Depression
- Irritability or mood swings
- High blood pressure

The gold standard for treatment for sleep apnea is a device called a CPAP, which stands for continuous positive airway pressure. This therapy involves wearing a small mask over the nose or cushions in the nose that is connected to an electric device delivering air at positive pressure. This air pressure acts as an air splint to keep the upper airway open and prevents the pauses from occurring during sleep. This is the most simple, effective and well-recognized treatment for sleep apnea.

If you believe your husband may be suffering from sleep apnea, he should schedule an appointment with a sleep medicine specialist for evaluation and consultation.

*Jessica Olszewski, RPSGT, is the manager of Mercy Gilbert Medical Center's Sleep Center. To learn more about sleep disorders, or to schedule an appointment, please call 480-728-ZZZZ (480-728-9999).*