

Suffering with Obstructive Sleep Apnoea

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Obstructive Sleep Apnoea



I only discovered that I suffered from sleep apnoea during a camping trip with my friends. They told me that I snored terribly but I never gave it much thought. Then one time my sister recorded my snoring and it gave me a shock. I sounded like an engine boat! But I still did not think it was a problem.

After some time, I started developing this condition called microsleep. I learnt later that this is caused by the severity of my obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA). I would fall asleep for a few seconds behind the wheel during outstation work trips. This only happened when I drove long-distance and it seriously worried me.

I couldn't get the treatment I needed until I learnt about the sleep study carried out at IJN. I spent a night at the sleep laboratory where they placed sensors on me to identify disruptions in the sleep pattern. These machines and a sleep technician studied the pattern of my brain waves, my sleep stages and cycles of rapid eye movement (REM).

The sleep study confirmed that I had OSA which caused me to stop breathing an average of 53-63 times in 1 hour. Each time I would not inhale for 10 seconds or more. It proved that my daytime sleepiness resulted from obstructions that caused me to take in less oxygen every time I went to sleep.

For the next part of the study, I began trying out a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machine to improve OSA symptoms. It was a mask that I had to wear to sleep at night, with a memory card that would later be studied by my doctor. The mask delivers enough air pressure to keep my airways open, thus reducing the obstruction.

Within a few days I started noticing a difference. I would not feel as tired as I used to and I suffered fewer body aches. After a month, I decided to purchase the machine myself. When I went back to my hometown, my sister congratulated me on fixing my loud snoring problem.

It has made me more confident to keep going on the hiking and camping trips that I love. I don't have to be anxious about keeping other people up at night anymore. The machine is light and portable and easy to pack on my travels. I am already planning my next wilderness adventure to stay on a river boathouse.

If I had any piece of advice to people who suffer from sleep apnoea, the sleep study is the best thing you can do for yourself. We do not know how severe it can be or how much worse the risks can get but the best thing we can do is minimise and manage this condition at home. Lower oxygen levels could cause complications in other parts of your body, like diabetes or obesity, so it is good to stay vigilant.



Left top: A polysomnography, also known as a sleep study, can be conducted at IJN's sleep laboratory. The time of day the study is carried out depends on the patients, to accommodate shift workers who habitually sleep during the day.



Left middle: Before going to bed in the exam room, a technologist will place sensors (electrodes) on your head and body but you will still have plenty of room to move and get comfortable.



Left bottom: A sleep technician's role is to collect, analyse and integrate all the patient's information before carrying out the sleep study. They will monitor the patient's sleep patterns and brain signals on a screen through the electrodes attached, while documenting significant events in the patient's sleep stages to better interpret the results.

Top: While the patient sleeps, an electroencephalography (EEG) monitors sleep stages and the cycles of rapid-eye movement (REM) and non-REM sleep.