

Published Date: 16 Apr 2013
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BREATHING DISORDER

Untreated sleep apnoea can lead to road accidents: Doctors

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A 48-year-old manager with a Dubai automobile company fell asleep at the wheel and rammed his car into another ahead of him when on a test drive with a client. The third of its kind accident in which Ganesh Saxena (name changed) sustained injuries made him visit SevenHills Hospital after treatment in Dubai. He was found to be suffering from sleep apnoea.

Dr Amit Panjwani, consultant in pulmonary medicine, SevenHills hospital, said, "He had complaints of snoring and disturbed sleep." She said he kept changing his position during sleep and, at times, stopped breathing for a few seconds.

"An obese man, he was found to have high blood pressure. He was made to undergo an overnight sleep study (polysomnography) which confirmed severe Obstructive Sleep Apnoea (OSA)," said Panjwani.

Doctors say they have seen a rising number of people suffering from sleep apnoea with many cases still untreated. Experts say there is sufficient evidence that inadequate sleep is the main cause of fatigue-related accidents. "In various studies it has been found that OSA patients are 7-10

IN NUMBERS

It is thought that as many as **3-7** in **100** middle-aged men and **2-5** in **100** middle-aged women develop OSA. Excessive sleepiness during the day is one of the main symptoms. Drivers with OSA are **7-12** times more vulnerable to car crashes as compared to people who don't suffer from such problems. Prevalence rate of the condition in society is **14-20%**



Prashant Chaugule

WHAT IS OSA?

Obstructive Sleep Apnoea is the commonest Sleep Related Breathing Disorder. It is characterised by abnormal pauses in breathing or abnormally low breathing during sleep. Each pause in breathing, called an apnoea, can last for at least 10 seconds and may occur five to 30 times or more in an hour. Each abnormally low breathing event is called a hypopnea.

This occurs when the soft tissue in the back of your throat relaxes during sleep, causing a blockage of the airway. Untreated sleep apnoea results in sleepiness during the day, slow reflexes, poor concentration and an increased risk of accidents. It can also lead to health problems such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure and weight gain.

times more likely to have accidents than others," said Panjwani.

Dr Preeti Devnani, specialist in Sleep Medicine and Neurology at Jaslok Hospital and an executive member in Indian Sleep Disorder Association, said, "If a person is feeling drowsy in the afternoon or while driving, he should treat

it as a warning. I have seen many cases where, because of the condition, people have had near misses while driving. Most of them are from affluent families and have sedentary lifestyles."

Various studies in India have shown that OSA is prevalent in around 10-12% of the population.