

Menopause may cause Sleep Disorders



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As if hot flashes, fatigue and mood swings weren't enough to worry about; studies now show menopause may also be a cause of common sleep disorders, such as snoring and sleep apnea.

Menopause is a time of change in a woman's life as she passes from her reproductive stage of life, to where she no longer menstruates or ovulates. Menopause usually occurs at 50 to 51 years of age and is a gradual process. As the ovaries age, they no longer respond as efficiently to the sex hormones secreted by the pituitary gland. This results in irregular periods, which eventually stop altogether.

A New Risk Factor for Sleep Apnea

Sleep-disordered breathing, a branch of sleep disorders, ranges from snoring to the more severe sleep apnea. Sleep apnea is an obstructive disorder where the sleeper repeatedly stops breathing during the night. Sleep apnea is believed to be an independent risk factor for both coronary and cerebrovascular disease, and for hypertension. Sleep apnea is also frequently associated with diabetes and obesity. The Department of Population Health Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison conducted a study on menopause and its potential as a risk factor for sleep-disordered breathing.

A total of 589 pre-, peri- and postmenopausal women enrolled in the Wisconsin Sleep Cohort Study were examined. The researchers found that postmenopausal women had approximately three times more sleep-disordered breathing events per hour of sleep than premenopausal women. The researchers concluded that the menopausal transition is significantly associated with an increased likelihood of having sleep-disordered breathing.

Based on this study, it would appear that menopause is a risk factor for developing sleep-disordered breathing. Menopausal women with complaints of snoring, daytime sleepiness, or unsatisfactory sleep should see their health care providers for an evaluation for sleep-disordered breathing. Visit