

## Erectile Dysfunction Linked to Sleep?



By Sleep disorders include snoring, sleep apnea, insomnia, narcolepsy, restless leg syndrome and many others. Some sleep disorders, such as snoring and sleep apnea, increase the risk of stroke, high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes. Did you also know that sleep apnea can lead to erectile dysfunction?

### Erection difficulties

Erectile dysfunction (ED) is described as the inability to achieve or sustain a penile erection. ED can have physical, psychological or drug-induced causes. ED has also been associated with sleep apnea.

A study was conducted at the Institute of Urology in Israel on the association between obstructive sleep apnea syndrome (OSAS) and ED. A total of 209 patients with OSAS were given a sleep questionnaire and the International Index of Erectile Function questionnaire (composed of three main topics: sexual satisfaction, erection during intercourse and morning erection). Patients also underwent full night in-laboratory polysomnography (monitoring of activity during sleep) examination.

The researchers observed that patients with OSAS, particularly severe OSAS, had a decrease in erectile function when compared to patients without OSAS. They also found that patients with frequent respiratory interruptions had the most severe ED.

### Treating ED

Another study compared the efficacy of sildenafil (Viagra™) and CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure), the most common treatment for sleep apnea, in men with ED and sleep apnea. Although sildenafil was found to be more effective for ED, improvements were also observed by directly treating sleep apnea through CPAP. The researchers recommended that perhaps the combination of these two approaches would be more effective for providing symptom relief.

### Natural flow

There are natural alternatives for treating ED. L-Arginine has been shown to increase blood flow to the genital area and thereby improve symptoms of ED. L-Arginine is a precursor for an enzyme that increases the body's production of nitric oxide, which the body uses to keep blood vessels dilated, improving the blood, and subsequently, oxygen supply to the heart and other organs, such as the genitals.