

Your Journey with Obstructive Sleep Apnea



For more information scan this QR code or go to myhealth.alberta.ca/obstructive-sleep-apnea-pathway

Quality sleep is important for your health and well-being. If you have obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) you stop breathing for short periods while you sleep. This can cause you to feel tired while awake and cause other health problems. OSA can range from mild to severe.

You are the most important part of your healthcare team. This guide will help you to know what to expect as you work with your team to manage and treat your sleep apnea. If you have any questions along the way, ask your healthcare team.

Before your appointment

- Write down how you feel, your symptoms, and any questions or concerns. You may consider using a [sleep journal](#).
- Symptoms you may experience include feeling tired, loud snoring, stopping breathing for short periods while sleeping, gasping or choking during sleep, and being restless or changing positions frequently while sleeping.



Visit your healthcare provider

- Your health includes physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, and social elements. To better manage your condition, your healthcare provider needs to understand who you are and what matters to you.
- They will ask about your sleep, your symptoms, and how they impact your day-to-day life. They may also ask your bed partner about your sleep. Consider bringing a family member or friend to support you.
- Your healthcare team may ask about any history of high blood pressure, stroke, or heart problems. They will conduct a physical exam, possibly measuring your neck circumference, height, weight, and blood pressure.



Get your tests

- Based on the results from your history, physical exam, and your risk factors for OSA, your healthcare team may recommend that you have a Home Sleep Apnea Test (HSAT).
- The HSAT is not appropriate for everyone. Some patients may be referred to a sleep specialist for more testing in a sleep laboratory.
- You may have mild, moderate, or severe OSA.
- Talk with your healthcare provider so you know what your sleep test results mean for you.



Review your treatment and management options

- Your healthcare provider may recommend that you make some changes to your lifestyle. These may include changes to your nutrition, activity level, changing your sleep position, and limiting your alcohol intake.
 - Your healthcare team may discuss the importance of driving safely with OSA and symptoms of excessive sleepiness.
 - Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) therapy is a common and often effective treatment for sleep apnea.
 - Not all people with OSA need CPAP.
 - If you do need CPAP machine, someone on your healthcare team will help guide you to the resources and supports you need.
- *Note: Not all treatments for OSA are covered by Alberta Health Care.



Talk with your healthcare provider about a referral

- Most people will not need a referral to see a specialist for OSA (for example, respirologist or sleep specialist).
- The decision about whether you need a referral is made based on the type of sleep apnea, the severity, the symptoms, and what previous treatments you have tried.



Start your treatment and watch your symptoms

- If you use a CPAP machine or other medical device and have problems (such as an uncomfortable mask or bad fit), make sure to tell your healthcare provider so they can help you.
- Write down any changes you notice in your symptoms.



Keep taking care of yourself

- Keep taking care of your overall health.
- Look for other healthy lifestyle resources and supports.



Whole-person health

Important Tips:

Need a family doctor?

ahs.ca/findadoctor

Need a translator or interpreter?

Let your healthcare provider know

Need health advice?

Call Health Link at 811

Need to find programs and resources in your community?

Call 211 or visit ab.211.ca



Primary Care
Alberta