

Sleep Apnea Has A Major Impact On Health

Chiari patients don't sleep very well. The Physical Impact Survey project included a validated sleep scale which indicated that the median sleep score is about twice the recognized cut-off for poor sleep. In addition, a whopping 80% of respondents in the Chiari1000 database listed trouble sleeping as a symptom they suffer(ed) from. While its not likely that all of these issues are due to sleep apnea, research has shown that as many as 60% of Chiari patients (both adults and children) exhibit clinical levels of apnea during the night.

The repeated cessations in breathing that define sleep apnea can have a profound effect on someone's health. In addition to daytime sleepiness, people with sleep apnea have been shown to have high rates of depression and other mental health issues. During the apnea episodes, it is believed that the heart works harder to compensate for the lack of oxygen which can lead to high blood pressure and an elevated risk for heart attacks and strokes. In fact, one study found that 50% of people with sleep apnea also had hypertension.

Less well known is the link between sleep apnea and eye related (ocular) issues. Research has found a strong association between obstructive sleep apnea and a specific type of optic nerve damage, floppy eyelid syndrome, and glaucoma, among others. For example, people with obstructive sleep apnea are nearly two and a half times more likely to develop glaucoma than people without apnea. Some researchers believe there is even a link between apnea and loss of visual acuity, but the evidence to support this is not yet conclusive.

A 2025 study found a link between obstructive sleep apnea and markers for systemic inflammation. The researchers grouped 263 obstructive apnea patients into 3 groups based on severity: mild, moderate, and severe. When they looked at four inflammatory markers, the markers were significantly higher in the severe group than both the moderate and mild groups.

Given the potential negative effects of sleep apnea, Chiari patients who suspect they may have it should see a medical professional for an evaluation.

Sources: Division of Sleep Medicine at Harvard Medical School. <https://sleep.hms.harvard.edu/education-training/public-education/sleep-and-health-education-program/sleep-health-education-28#:~:text=Obstructive%20sleep%20apnea%20increases%20the,a%20common%20chronic%20medical%20condition.>

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understanding of Chiari. Introductory information and many more research articles can be found in the [Conquer Chiari Library](#).

Conquer Chiari is a 501(c)(3) public charity dedicated to improving the experiences and outcomes of Chiari patients through education, awareness and research.