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Irina Trosman, MD

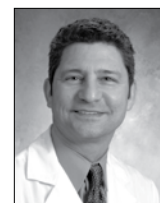
I snore and occasionally gasp for air. I am not aware of it, but I am tired a lot and wake up with frequent headaches. Could it be related to the extra weight I'm still carrying from my pregnancy? Your symptoms may be related to your weight gain since weight is certainly one of the most important risk factors for development of Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA). If you have Sleep Apnea, it could very well have started in your second or third trimester, because nearly one third of all pregnant women develop OSA. OSA is caused by partial or complete collapse of the upper part of the airway resulting in snoring, pauses in breathing, decline in oxygen levels, frequent awakenings and sleep disruption. Daytime fatigue and sleepiness, difficulties with concentration and memory as well as morning headaches are common daytime symptoms of OSA. Patients with OSA have significantly higher risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, high blood pressure, weight gain and obesity. Women are at higher risk of developing OSA if they are postmenopausal, have a family history of this condition, suffer from a low thyroid gland function or carry extra weight. This disease can be accurately diagnosed and successfully treated with the help of a sleep doctor, and there are even treatments that are safe to use during pregnancy.

Irina Trosman, MD, Sleep Medicine Physician, Northshore Sleep Medicine



Steven J. Stryker, MD

A relative was recently diagnosed with colon cancer. Is there anything I can do to prevent this from developing in me? Colorectal cancer afflicts about 150,000 Americans each year and is the second leading cause of cancer death in the U.S. behind lung cancer. Ironically, it represents one of the more preventable malignancies. The most effective way to prevent it is to undergo screening colonoscopy at the appropriate age. For most individuals, this means a colonoscopy at age 50 (age 45 for African-Americans). If your relative with colorectal cancer is a first-degree relative (i.e. parent or sibling), then screening should occur no later than 10 years younger than the age of onset in the relative. Screening colonoscopy has been shown to decrease the development of colorectal cancer by removing precancerous polyps before they can develop into true cancer. Early detection of existing cancers through screening also leads to improved survival rates. It's estimated that if everyone who should be screened were getting screened, 85-90 percent of colorectal cancers would be prevented. More recently, there has been great interest in dietary and lifestyle changes, which may also decrease the incidence of colorectal cancer or polyps. While these measures don't replace the need for screening, cessation of smoking, daily exercise, avoidance of obesity, use of a daily aspirin, supplemental calcium and vitamin D have all been proven effective. Other areas of conflicting information, which are still under investigation, include high fiber diet, the use of folic acid, the herb turmeric or statin drugs. Steven J. Stryker, MD, Division of Surgical Oncology, Northwestern Memorial Hospital



Daniel Yohanna, MD

What medical and emotional trauma can a family expect to experience after a loved one returns from military service? Wars and natural disasters remind us of the massive psychological effects people experience after a major trauma. Almost all survivors will have acute traumatic stress disorders and many will later develop Posttraumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD), defined as one month duration of symptoms after the event. Some symptoms include: persistent re-experiencing of the trauma, like nightmares, or persistent avoidance of things that are associated with the trauma or numbing of general responses, like diminished interest in activities. Treating the victims requires therapy that helps them disengage the strong, even abnormal emotional response to the memory of the trauma. This can be done through individual or group psychotherapies. Medications can also be helpful, both at the time of the trauma and after the development of PTSD to dampen the response. As for family members, education is needed to help them understand their loved one's behaviors, tolerating some of the behaviors, knowing when they need intervention and how to be a good listener. For many people with PTSD, with supportive families, they can improve without other interventions. In fact, the majority of people with PTSD will recover with natural supports in their home and community within six to nine months.

Daniel Yohanna, MD, Associate Professor and Vice Chair, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience, University of Chicago



Lisa B. Gordon, PhD

Between my full-time job and two children, the only thing I want to do in bed is sleep. How can I revive my libido? As mother and career woman, you are deeply aware of how your body gives to other people, so your husband approaching you for sex may feel like one additional task asked of your body. Become aware of how your body receives pleasurable sensations: the silkiness of a blouse or the aroma of freshly brewed coffee. Remembering that your body can receive pleasure enables you to view sex for the purpose of joy rather than as another "to do." Rather than immediately rejecting your husband's sexual approach, commit to five minutes of intimate touching. Hold hands, listen to each other's breathing or heartbeat, kiss tenderly or embrace bare-chested. After five minutes, decide if you'd like to continue. Most women assume it's better to never see the movie than to start the movie without seeing the climax. However, most men prefer some movie to no movie. Experience the movie! Share intimate touching for pleasure and connection. You can stay for the intercourse if you're both in the mood.

Lisa B. Gordon, Ph.D, Licensed Clinical Psychologist, The Family Institute

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