

NEWS RELEASE



www.bridgeporthospital.org

For immediate release
Contact: John Cappiello, (203) 384-3637
John.Cappiello@bpthosp.org

Sleep Week highlights importance of treating sleep disorders

BRIDGEPORT, CT (March 3, 2014) – Daylight saving time begins this year on Sunday, March 9. At 2:00 a.m. that day, clocks “spring ahead” to 3:00 a.m., resulting the “loss” of one hour of time, and for many people, the loss of sleep. It is therefore no coincidence that March 9 marks the culmination of National Sleep Awareness Week, a time when sleep medicine professionals try to raise awareness about the causes and treatment of sleep disorders.

“There are various causes, emotional and physical, for the inability to get enough sleep,” says Armand Wolff, MD, medical director of the Center for Sleep Medicine at Bridgeport Hospital. “The leading physical cause of sleep deprivation is obstructive sleep apnea, which is characterized by the repeated interruption of breathing during sleep.”

Sleep apnea is caused when the muscles in the back of the throat fail to keep the airway open, Dr. Wolff explains. It disturbs sleep and can lead to low blood oxygen levels, which in turn can play a role in hypertension (high blood pressure), heart disease, and mood and memory problems.

Dr Wolff adds that many people associate sleep deprivation with insomnia, which affects, at some point in life, one in every two adults in the United States, making it the most common sleep complaint among Americans. Insomnia often stems from emotional stress or another medical condition. If untreated, insomnia can contribute to poorer overall health and a higher incidence of depression.

Sleep apnea occurs in all age groups and both sexes, although the incidence of the disorder increases in people 40 and older. Smoking, alcohol consumption and being overweight also increase the risk of sleep apnea.

“Common signs of sleep apnea are sleepiness during the day, fatigue and snoring,” says Dr. Wolff. “Because most people do not realize that they snore, it is often a spouse or family member who prompts the sleep apnea patient to seek medical help.”

The most effective way to diagnose sleep apnea is with a medical test known as a sleep study, which can be done by trained professionals at a certified sleep center or in the patient’s own home. During a sleep study, breathing patterns, heart rate and other factors are carefully monitored by trained sleep technicians while the patient sleeps. The results of the study are evaluated by a sleep medicine physician and a course of treatment is prescribed.

The usual treatment for sleep apnea is continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP). CPAP is administered through a specially-fitted mask, and keeps the patient’s airway open during sleep. Some patients have difficulty adjusting to wearing the mask but newer models are smaller, and in some cases nostril tubes can be used.

“If you or someone you know suspects that you have sleep apnea, please act soon,” Dr. Wolff urges. “Seek help at a certified sleep center so you can avoid the more serious medical problems and potentially harmful accidents that sleep loss can cause.”

Part of Yale New Haven Health System, Bridgeport Hospital is a 383-bed acute care hospital (plus 42 beds licensed to Yale-New Haven Children’s Hospital) serving parts of Fairfield and New Haven counties, including Connecticut’s most populous city. The hospital admits more than 18,000 patients and receives more than 240,000 outpatient visits annually.

#####

Photo caption: One of the sleep study rooms at the Bridgeport Holiday Inn, where Bridgeport Hospital’s Center for Sleep Medicine moved its diagnostic suite in 2011. Consultations with physicians and other staff take place at the hospital’s main campus. Increasingly, when possible, sleep studies are being done at the patient’s own home on portable monitors.