

Know Your Enemy: Sleep Apnea

Sleep apnea is a disorder that causes brief interruptions of breathing during sleep. These pauses can last ten seconds or more and can occur up to 400 times each night. Disruptions like these compromise both the quantity and quality of sleep, and if gone untreated, can reflect in your driving performance, safety and health. Often, those suffering from sleep apnea do not realize it, but as you age, you will become more at risk. Other factors that may put you at a higher risk for sleep apnea include a family history of the disorder, being overweight, having a recessed chin or large overbite or smoking and alcohol use.

Symptoms of Sleep Apnea include:

- Daytime sleepiness.
- Falling asleep at odd times.
- Depression.
- Irritability.
- Morning headaches.
- Frequent nighttime urination.
- Lack of concentration.

Other signs of sleep apnea that are more easily detected by others include loud snoring and gasping or choking during sleep. The good news is sleep apnea (as well as other common sleep disorders) is highly treatable. If you have noticed any of the above symptoms for more than three days a week, consider talking to a doctor about your sleep habits to ensure you are fully alert and fully prepared to hit the road.