

# GERD + CPAP = SLEEP

Gastro Esophageal Reflux Disorder (GERD) is a chronic condition where stomach acid flows up your esophagus. This leads to irritation and is painful. While most people occasionally experience heartburn or acid reflux, you may have GERD if your acid reflux symptoms are chronic and occur more than twice a week. If left untreated, GERD can lead to more serious health problems, including sleep disorders.

According to the National Sleep Foundation (NSF), GERD is one of the leading causes of sleep disturbances among adults between the ages of 45 and 64. Adult patients who experience nighttime heartburn are more likely than those without nighttime heartburn to report the following sleep-related symptoms:

- Insomnia
- Daytime sleepiness
- Restless leg syndrome
- Sleep apnea

If you suffer from acid reflux, heartburn or GERD, you're not alone. Symptoms tend to worsen at night, and falling asleep can be painful.

### *Why does this happen?*

- The concentration of acid in the stomach is higher at night
- While lying down, acid reflux is able to remain in the esophagus
- While sleeping, we don't swallow
- Late night eating

### *Does sleep apnea exacerbate GERD?*

Obstructive sleep apnea is when you pause in your breathing during sleep. These pauses can last from a few seconds to minutes. It could occur 30 times or more an hour. Typically, normal breathing resumes, sometimes with a loud snort or choking sound. The breathing pauses create vacuum-like negative pressures in the chest wall causing

the acid levels to increase during sleep. With repetitive pauses, GERD symptoms can be frequent. Compound that with obstructive sleep apnea and a good night's sleep is impossible.

### *What can I do?*

- Exercise
- Lose weight
- Limit meals to three-four hours before bedtime
- Eliminate bedtime snacks
- Eat smaller meals
- Avoid
  - Alcohol
  - Chocolate
  - Coffee
  - Tomatoes
  - Fried foods
  - Garlic
- Test for obstructive sleep apnea
- Sleep propped up with pillows or a wedge
- Take medication

### *Does treatment for my sleep disorder help with GERD?*

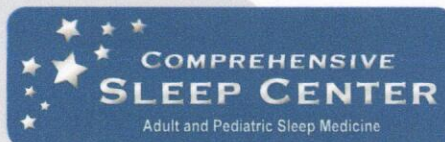
For most patients with both GERD and sleep apnea, continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) treatment eases both problems. Treatment of either condition appears to help the other for most patients. Studies indicate that if you improve reflux, you also improve sleep apnea and vice versa. But it is not yet known whether one condition causes the other or if either condition makes the other one worse.

A new study from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) suggests that CPAP therapy may help improve the symptoms of nocturnal gastro esophageal reflux in patients with obstructive sleep apnea. It showed that CPAP treatment improves nighttime acid reflux symptoms without any acid reducing medication.



However, minimum CPAP usage of at least four hours per night for 25 percent of nights or more was needed to achieve any acid reflux benefit.

If you suffer from acid reflux, heartburn or GERD, you're not alone. Symptoms tend to worsen at night, and falling asleep can be painful. Dr. Mamedov recommends that those with nighttime GERD symptoms receive screening for sleep apnea. Call 517-755-6888 to schedule your appointment or talk to your primary care physician.



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