

# HEALTH *IN* ALASKA

## How About a *Good* Nights Sleep!

by Gary L Child, D.O. Managing Director,  
Northern Nights Sleep Clinic  
AA Specialty Health Center

Most Alaskans live hectic lives, but we don't usually consider sleep as part of the problem. We probably complain that we don't get enough sleep or that the quality of our sleep is in need of improvement, but by and large, we move on and leave the sleeping part of our lives as something we'll catch up on. Others just treat their lack of sleep problem with stimulants rather than determining what the problem is and what we might do about it. America has built up a whole industry of caffeine distribution so that we can survive the day. *What we should be doing is becoming more aware of our sleep and how to integrate good sleep habits into our lives for better health and wellness.* Whether our sleep is disordered because of shift work, snoring with sleep apnea, restless legs, or other disruptions, this leads to sleep deprivation. Our health and daily activities can be greatly affected.

### Obstructive Sleep Apnea

One of the more common causes of poor sleep and bad health is obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). It is said that OSA is probably as common as diabetes in the United States. It is certainly an under diagnosed problem that can be corrected. Part of the difficulty is that it is often overlooked. For those with OSA, there is a higher



risk of high blood pressure, stroke, heart attack, and increased pain in those with chronic pain syndromes. Most people with OSA will have daytime sleepiness and they usually snore at night. Waking up and not feeling rested, falling asleep while watching TV in the evening, dozing at a stoplight during commutes are all signs that you may have OSA.

### Diagnosing OSA

The diagnosis of OSA requires an overnight Polysomnogram (PSG). This involves the use of a sleep center/lab where the patient's upper airway is examined for obstruction and sensors are applied to the head (painlessly), in order to record several data points throughout the night while the patient sleeps. The final report is put together by a sleep specialist and recommendations for treatment, if necessary, are made.

### Treatment

Although there are several options for treatment, the gold standard is continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP). Newer equipment and masks make this a more pleasant experience than it has been in the past. Variations of CPAP also make the process better. If you are not sleeping well or are using caffeine for your sleep debt, get help now.

**Northern Nights Sleep Clinic offers laboratory sleep studies, CPAP and bilevel titration studies and multiple sleep latency studies to treat sleep problems. For more information, call (907) 563-2873.**