

# Many patients with sleep apnea also suffer from GI tract conditions

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Patients who suffer from obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) also tend to have additional gastrointestinal (GI) tract conditions, such as gastric reflux and hiatal hernia, which form at the opening in your diaphragm where your food pipe (esophagus) joins your stomach.

In a paper presented at the 2009 American Academy of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery Foundation (AAO-HNSF) Annual Meeting & OTO EXPO in San Diego, researchers analyzed prospective clinical study data of 42 adult patients with proven OSA verified in overnight polysomnography. Every patient also underwent an upper GI endoscopy to evaluate their gastrointestinal health.

Pathological GI findings were found in vast majority of patients (83.3 percent), 59.5 percent of them showing two or more findings. The most frequent observed pathology was hiatus hernia (64.3 percent of patients), followed by erosive esophagitis (45.2 percent), histological esophagitis and erosive gastritis (both 21.4 percent), duodenal ulcer (7.1 percent), and biliary reflux (4.8 percent).

Approximately 12 million Americans have [sleep apnea](#). [Sleep](#) apnea is characterized by episodes of reduced or no airflow throughout the night.

From their findings, the authors conclude that patients who appear to suffer from OSA should not only be investigated in sleep laboratory, but should also be referred to a gastroenterologist for additional diagnostic exams in order to provide a comprehensive treatment approach.

Source: American Academy of Otolaryngology

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