

# Sleep apnea therapy improves golf game

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Golfers who undergo treatment for sleep apnea may improve their golf game as well as their overall health, shows new research. A new study presented at CHEST 2009, the 75th annual international scientific assembly of the American College of Chest Physicians (ACCP), found that golfers with obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) who received nasal positive airway pressure (NPAP) for their disorder improved their daytime sleepiness scores and lowered their golf handicap by as much as three strokes. Researchers suggest that the possibility of improving your golf game may be a significant motivator to improve NPAP compliance rates among golfers.

"More so than many sports, [golf](#) has a strong intellectual component, with on-course strategizing, focus, and endurance being integral components to achieving good play," said Marc L. Benton, MD, FCCP, Atlantic Sleep and Pulmonary Associates, Madison, NJ. "OSAS can lead to daytime sleepiness, fatigue, and cognitive impairment, all side effects which can negatively impact a person's ability to golf to the best of one's ability."

Dr. Benton and colleague Neil S. Friedman, RN, RPSGT, from Morristown Memorial Hospital, Madison, NJ, evaluated the impact of NPAP on the golf handicap index (HI) of 12 golfers with diagnosed moderate to severe OSA. HI was recorded upon study entry, as was the Epworth sleepiness scale (ESS), a validated questionnaire used to assess daytime sleepiness, and a sleep questionnaire (SQ) developed by the authors. After 20 rounds of golf while receiving NPAP treatment (approximately 3 to 5 months), the treatment group demonstrated a

significant drop in average HI, 12.4 (+/- 3.5) to 11.0 (+/- 4.7). Patients in the study group also improved their ESS score, 11.8 (+/- 6.6) to 5.5 (+/- 3.6), and the SQ score, 14.3 (+/- 7.5), to 3.1 (+/- 3.1). A control group of 12 subjects demonstrated no change in HI, ESS score, or SQ score during this study.

"As any golfer knows, when your ability to think clearly or make good decisions is compromised, the likelihood of playing your best is greatly diminished," said Dr. Benton. "Through treatment with NPAP, we can improve many cognitive metrics, such as attention span, memory, decision-making abilities, and frustration management, which may, in turn, positively affect a person's golf game."

Results of the study also showed that the best golfers, defined as HI

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