

# Osteoporosis risk heightened among sleep apnea patients

April 15 2014

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A diagnosis of obstructive sleep apnea may raise the risk of osteoporosis, particularly among women or older individuals, according to a new study published in the Endocrine Society's *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism (JCEM)*.

Sleep apnea is a condition that causes brief interruptions in breathing during sleep. Obstructive [sleep apnea](#), the most common form, occurs when a person's airway becomes blocked during sleep. If sleep apnea goes untreated, it can raise the risk for stroke, cardiovascular disease and heart attacks.

"Ongoing sleep disruptions caused by obstructive sleep apnea can harm many of the body's systems, including the skeletal system," said one of the study's authors, Kai-Jen Tien, MD, of Chi Mei Medical Center in Tainan, Taiwan. "When sleep apnea periodically deprives the body of oxygen, it can weaken bones and raise the risk of osteoporosis. The progressive condition can lead to bone fractures, increased medical costs, reduced quality of life and even death."

The retrospective cohort study used records from Taiwan's single-payer National Health Insurance program to track treatment of 1,377 people who were diagnosed with obstructive sleep apnea between 2000 and 2008. During the course of the next six years, researchers compared the rate of osteoporosis [diagnosis](#) in this group of obstructive sleep apnea patients to 20,655 people comparable in age and gender who did not have the sleep disorder.

Researchers found the incidence of osteoporosis was 2.7 times higher among patients with sleep apnea than their counterparts, after adjusting for age, gender, other medical problems, geographic location and monthly income. Women and older individuals faced increased risk of developing the bone condition.

"As more and more people are diagnosed with [obstructive sleep apnea](#) worldwide, both patients and health care providers need to be aware of the heightened risk of developing other conditions," Tien said. "We need to pay more attention to the relationship between sleep apnea and bone health so we can identify strategies to prevent [osteoporosis](#)."

**More information:** The study, "Obstructive Sleep Apnea and Risk of Osteoporosis: A Population-Based Cohort Study in Taiwan," was published online, ahead of print.

Provided by The Endocrine Society

Citation: Osteoporosis risk heightened among sleep apnea patients (2014, April 15) retrieved 24 April 2024 from

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