

REALLY?

# Really? Treating Sleep Apnea Reduces Inflammation

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Doctors have plenty of good reasons to persuade people with [sleep apnea](#) to get it treated. The widespread disorder causes disruptions in breathing at night, which can ruin sleep and raise the likelihood of problems like [obesity](#) and fatigue.

The standard treatment for the condition, a mask worn at night that delivers continuous positive airway pressure, or CPAP, significantly improves apnea, even though [many people don't like to wear it](#). But the mask may do more than restore normal breathing at night. Some research suggests it reduces inflammation, benefiting overall health.

Many studies have looked at the link between sleep apnea and high levels of inflammatory markers. To

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get a clearer picture of the connection, a team of researchers recently carried out a meta-analysis that pooled data from two dozen trials involving over 1,000 patients. It was [published last month](#).

The data suggested that treating apnea with CPAP significantly reduces levels of two proteins associated with inflammation: tumor necrosis factor and [C-reactive protein](#), or CRP. Sleep apnea is a risk factor for several severe chronic conditions like [Type 2 diabetes](#) and heart disease. It's not clear whether apnea helps drive the development of these disorders or vice versa. But reducing inflammation may be one way in which treatment with CPAP reverses some of the long-term consequences of the [sleep disorder](#).

## **THE BOTTOM LINE**

Treating sleep apnea with positive airway pressure helps to lower systemic inflammation, which might prevent some of the other problems associated with the disorder.

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