

## News Release

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### **Sleeping Better, Living Longer: A New Era in Sleep Apnea Care**

Sleep apnea is more than just loud snoring — it's a serious medical condition with life-threatening consequences if left untreated. Fortunately, new advances are giving patients better tools to fight back.

"Sleep apnea is a disorder where people experience pauses in breathing while they sleep," Joe Hassin Cordero, M.D., Texas Tech Physicians head and neck surgeon. "These interruptions can be due to airway blockages, lack of brain signals or a mix of both, and they lead to a host of long-term health issues."

Those risks include high blood pressure, stroke, heart failure, arrhythmias, pulmonary hypertension and worsened diabetes. It can also affect work productivity and daily functioning due to chronic fatigue.

Sleep apnea is typically diagnosed through a sleep study known as a polysomnogram, which can be done in a lab or at home. During the test, providers track oxygen levels, movement, breathing patterns and eye activity to determine a patient's Apnea-Hypopnea Index (AHI) — a score that determines the severity of the condition.

An AHI under 5 is normal. Between 5 and 15 is mild, 15 to 30 is moderate, and anything over 30 is considered severe. The gold standard for treatment remains the CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) machine, which keeps the airway open using air pressure. However, Cordero noted that many patients struggle to stick with the therapy long term.

"Only about 7% of patients use their CPAP correctly every night," he explained. "They find it noisy, uncomfortable or inconvenient for travel, and some even stop using it altogether."

For patients who can't tolerate CPAP, a surgical option offers new hope: the Inspire device. FDA-approved for the past seven years, Inspire is an implantable device that stimulates the hypoglossal nerve, which controls tongue movement.

"When the device is turned on at bedtime, it gently moves the tongue forward during each breath, preventing airway collapse," Cordero said. "It's like a pacemaker for your airway."

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The Inspire therapy is approved only for patients with an AHI between 15 and 65, who have a body mass index (BMI) under 34, and who are unable to tolerate CPAP. Cordero explained that it's especially popular with patients who travel frequently or want a less cumbersome alternative to traditional machines.

"I've had patients who got the Inspire device and absolutely love it," he said. "They sleep better, travel easier and feel more energetic throughout the day. It's helped them maintain a healthy weight and live a fuller life."

Sleep apnea's link to obesity has also made weight loss a key part of treatment. Cordero said that newer medications like GLP-1 receptor agonists are being used alongside devices like Inspire to help patients manage both their weight and their sleep apnea symptoms.

Cordero emphasized that sleep apnea is a condition with serious health consequences but one that can be effectively managed with proper diagnosis and treatment.

"Our goal is to help people breathe better, sleep better and live longer," he said. "Whether it's through CPAP, Inspire or weight management, we now have more options than ever to get them there."