

# NO PLACE LIKE HOME

New in-home sleep study aims to help more people with **sleep apnea** get treatment

BY JOHN BERGGREN



**How Is Your Sleep?** 

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The National Institutes of Health estimates that 18 million Americans have sleep apnea, yet few have had the problem diagnosed. Many have been reluctant to seek treatment because it required seeing a doctor and having an overnight sleep study performed at an accredited lab.

A new in-home test offered through Salina Regional Health Center's Sleep Disorders Center aims to reduce the reluctance to getting treatment.

"Many patients claim to be a little sleepy during the day, but put off getting help because it takes time away from work and can be a bother," says Ted Daughety, M.D., sleep physician at Salina Regional. "Many people, especially men, like to keep working until they simply can't anymore. Often their symptoms gradually worsen."

Symptoms such as excessive snoring, gasping for air in the middle of the night, early morning headaches and feeling tired during the day are common among those with sleep apnea. Those who are overweight or have some type of abnormality in the upper airway are most likely to have it.

The disease is characterized by involuntary pauses, or apneic events, during a night's sleep. These pauses in breathing interrupt deep, restorative sleep. Treatment is often achieved with a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP)

device in which a patient wears a mask over his or her nose during sleep to help keep the airway open.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

When a home study has been deemed appropriate, patients stop by the Sleep Disorders Center to pick up a home sleep-monitoring kit and receive instructions for use from a sleep technician. The test involves wearing a module similar in size to a smartphone strapped to the abdomen and hooking up a series of sensors to monitor



Carrie Thomason, sleep lab technician at the Sleep Disorders Center, shows a patient how to use the new in-home sleep study system.

respiration during sleep. Along with easy-to-use directions included in the kit, patients can call sleep technicians working at the Sleep Disorders Center for additional assistance throughout the night.

Information from the study is recorded on the module and, once returned to the Sleep Disorders Center, results are downloaded to a computer for analysis.

## WHO'S A CANDIDATE?

Patients eligible for home studies generally are those who are strongly suspected of having moderate to severe sleep apnea, but don't have underlying health issues such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder, diabetes or heart problems.

"Diagnosis can be more complex when other health issues are involved," Daughety says. "Home tests are geared toward the 40- to 50-year-old patient displaying the classic symptoms of sleep apnea." Patients with underlying health concerns will likely need to have their study performed in a lab. 