More and more Indians are suffering from sleep disorders: IMA

New Delhi, May 8, 2017: According to a recent study conducted by consumer products company, about 93% Indians are sleep-derived. While this can be attributed to the changing lifestyle and gadget addiction, the interesting part is that many are not aware of their condition. Disturbed sleep is more prevalent in Indian women than men and a majority of the women suffer from conditions like depression and anxiety, says the study.

Some primary sleep disorders include narcolepsy, insomnia, and sleep apnea. Unable to fit into the regular sleep cycle combined with the stress, many people today resort to consumption of sleeping pills which can have further side effects like drowsiness, impaired learning ability, respiratory depression, changes in appetite, and dizziness.

Speaking about this, Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement, said, "Sleep disorders are a major cause for concern amongst the medical fraternity today. Stress, addiction to laptops and smartphones, and an unhealthy lifestyle are the major reasons for this. Of all the sleep disorders, sleep apnea is perhaps the most worrisome as it causes a reduction in the blood-oxygen levels. Due to this, a person may not be able to breathe sufficiently during sleep. Most of the times, people are unaware of their condition, as snoring is the only hint of this disorder and people tend to treat snoring as a normal occurrence during sleep. This can further complicate things."

Apart from constant use of gadgets, there are other causes for sleep disorders. Allergies, colds, and upper respiratory infections often make it difficult to breathe at night and this disrupt sleep. Constant, chronic pain due to certain conditions like arthritis, chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, inflammatory bowel disease, persistent headaches, and continuous lower back pain can also result in lack of sleep. Sleep disorders can further lead to obesity, heart diseases, and psychiatric problems.
Adding to this, Dr Aggarwal, said, "Treatment for sleep disorders depends on the type and underlying cause. Generally, a combination of medical treatments and lifestyle changes can work well for a person. However, long-term cases can take time to resolve. Sticking to the treatment plan and regular communication is the key to overcoming sleep disorders."

There are some basic lifestyle changes one can make to address sleep-related issues.

- **Cut down on caffeine:** Caffeine drinkers may find it difficult to drift off to sleep easily and their sleep is often shorter and lighter. Caffeine blocks the effects of adenosine, a neurotransmitter that is known to promote and aid sleep. Caffeine also increases urination, this disrupting the regular sleep cycle.

- **Cut back on alcohol:** Alcohol depresses the nervous system and suppresses REM sleep. Alcohol is known to be responsible for up to 10% of chronic insomnia cases. It can worsen snoring and other breathing problems as well.

- **Be physically active:** Indulging in regular physical activities such as walking, running, or swimming can help you sleep faster, get sufficiently deeper sleep, and awaken you much less at night. However, one should not exercise two hours before bedtime as it can be stimulating and make it harder to fall asleep.

- **Follow a regular schedule:** It is important to stick to a regular sleep schedule in order to keep the circadian sleep/wake cycle synchronized. It is advisable to get up around the same time every day, even after a late night. Also, napping during the day time can make it harder for a person to fall asleep at night.

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**About IMA:** Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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