

Angie

New parent worries

Angie is four months pregnant and feeling overwhelmed. Her mood is all over the place during the day and she often feels anxious. She still has morning sickness and regularly gets headaches. Despite trying to go to bed earlier, Angie just tosses and turns all night — even her partner is getting worse sleep because of her restlessness. Her friends keep telling her this is all just part of being pregnant and you just need to get through it.

At her next appointment, Angie tells her doctor how she has been feeling. Noting that Angie is being treated for high blood pressure and excessive weight gain, her doctor suggests meeting with a sleep specialist to see if a sleep problem may be contributing to her symptoms.

When she meets with the sleep specialist, Angie describes her sleep habits and how she feels during the day. The sleep specialist asks questions and listens carefully to figure out what may be going on. The sleep doctor suspects Angie has obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), a sleep disorder that causes breathing problems during sleep. Even though one in five pregnant women have OSA, it often goes undiagnosed because the symptoms are similar to other pregnancy symptoms. When left untreated, OSA can increase the risk for high blood pressure, gestational diabetes and a C-section delivery.



Angie is scheduled for a sleep study to confirm that she has OSA. She stays in a sleep lab overnight, where she has a private room and bathroom. While she sleeps, her breathing, heart rate and sleep cycles are tracked. After reviewing the study results, Angie's doctor prescribes continuous positive airway pressure, or CPAP. The CPAP machine takes a few weeks to get used to, but the sleep specialist is there to answer her questions and ensure everything is working properly.

Angie can tell a difference almost immediately. She has more energy during the day and is far less anxious. Both she and her partner are sleeping better. When she goes to her next prenatal appointment, her doctor tells her that her blood pressure has gone down since her last visit.