

## Snorers sought for age-related breath control study

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Researchers at the University of Birmingham are recruiting healthy snorers and non-snorers aged between 60 and 75 years to take part in research into the effect of ageing on the control of breathing.

The School of Sport and Exercise Science study will provide valuable information on the potential causal role of the controlling mechanism of human breathing on the development of sleep disorders in the elderly population.

In some individuals, when the muscles relax during sleep, the airway can become narrow and often collapse completely resulting in less air reaching the lungs and a reduced amount of oxygen in the blood. This can happen multiple times during sleep and is called obstructive sleep apnoea. Obstructive sleep apnoea can result in high blood pressure, it increases the risk of heart disease and it has possible causal links for metabolic disorders including diabetes.

Obstructive sleep apnoea is common among the general population (occurring in two to four per cent of individuals aged 30-50 years) but is much more prevalent among older people, affecting almost half of those aged 60 years or over. Previous research has shown that changes in the way our breathing is controlled are linked to the progression of this disorder. 'The study's aim is to investigate whether the high prevalence of obstructive sleep apnoea in the elderly population is partly due to changes in the control of breathing,' explains research co-ordinator Keith Pugh.

The researchers are looking for healthy non-smoking, snorers and non-snorers aged between 60 and 75 years to visit the University of Birmingham twice. During these visits participants will be exposed to conditions that allow the team to investigate the sensitivity by which their breathing is regulated. These results will be compared with those of younger participants to highlight the contribution of ageing in alterations of the way we breathe.

Volunteers will be paid reasonable travel expenses and will receive information relating to sleep-related breathing disorders.

Inclusion criteria:

- Participants must be non-smokers, have a normal body weight and must be free from any form of respiratory or cardiovascular disease with the exception of mild high blood pressure.
- Participants must also be free of metabolic disorders (including diabetes), and sleep disorders (including obstructive sleep apnoea).

Anyone wishing to participate should contact:

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### Notes to Editors

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