

Sleep Apnea Pill Shows Success Following Large Clinical Trial

Those treated with a combination pill experienced 56% fewer breathing disruptions during sleep.

July 25, 2025 By Laura Schmidt

A new pill shows promise for people living with [obstructive sleep apnea](#) (OSA), according to results from a [large clinical trial](#) conducted by Apnimed, a pharmaceutical company focused on treating sleep apnea, [reports Science](#).

OSA occurs when the throat muscles narrow during sleep, which leads to temporary pauses in breathing that can cause people to snore or jolt awake.

About 30 million people in the United States have sleep apnea, but only 6 million have been diagnosed with the condition, according to the [American Medical Association](#). What's more, the [Hispanic Community Health Study/Study of Latinos](#) found that up to 14% of Latinos have obstructive sleep apnea.

OSA has been linked to an increased risk for heart disease, hypertension, diabetes and depression, according to the [American Academy of Sleep Medicine](#).

The new clinical trial showed that AD109, a combination of two medications in one pill, stimulates muscles that keep the airway open, which significantly decreases breathing disruptions caused by OSA, according to Science.

For decades, the primary treatment for OSA has been continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) via a machine that attaches to a person's face and keeps the airway open by forcing air into it. Though effective, many patients find the CPAP machine and the mask required to use it cumbersome.

About 10 years ago, scientists identified a combination of two existing medications that kept the

upper airway open by simultaneously stimulating muscles critical to keeping the throat open.

After promising results in an earlier trial, Apnimed launched a larger trial in 2023 involving 646 people with OSA. Those treated with the combination pill experienced 56% fewer instances of disrupted breathing during sleep. Disrupted

What's more, 22% of treated individuals experienced fewer than five airway-obstructing events per hour, meaning they achieved complete control of their OSA, according to Science.

"It's pretty clear that this medication combination is reducing obstructive sleep apnea events. And it's reducing the severity of oxygen drops during sleep. That is exciting," Sigrid Veasey, MD, a sleep physician and neuroscientist at the University of Pennsylvania who was not involved with the study, told Science. "The effects are robust and have a good scientific basis."

Experts note that additional research is required to determine whether the drug affects patients' OSA symptoms, such as daytime sleepiness. Apnimed plans to present the full clinical trial results at a conference later this year. Additionally, a second large 12-month trial of the pill is expected to be completed this summer. Apnimed aims to apply for Food and Drug Administration approval by early 2026.

To read more, click [#Sleep Apnea](#). There, you'll find headlines such as "[Obstructive Sleep Apnea Associated With Increased Risk for Long COVID](#)," "[Lack of Sleep May Worsen Inflammation in People With HIV](#)" and "[Addressing Needs of Latinos with Sleep Disorders](#)."