



Dentally Speaking
by
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Health Risks of Snoring and Sleep Apnea

Have you been told that you snore? Does your significant other keep you awake while they snore through the night? Most likely, you've always considered snoring to be a mere inconvenience in your life. But, believe it or not, this nuisance plaguing you while you sleep each night is actually quite hazardous to your health. Snoring is a sleep disorder and needs to be taken seriously by those who are affected by it.

Health Risks

Many people lose almost one hour of sleep each night due to the excessive snoring of their partner! So not only are you going through your daily life lacking sleep, you are also causing the sleep deprivation of those you love. More importantly, snoring frequently is a sign that you suffer from sleep apnea, which can be very dangerous to your health if it is not treated. Obstructive sleep

apnea (OSA) can cause you to stop breathing dozens of times a night for at least ten seconds at a time. It occurs when there is an obstruction blocking your airway. These blockages are caused by the soft tissue at the back of the throat, your tongue, your tonsils or your adenoids. This blockage stops your breathing, which then deprives your body of oxygen.

Your brain and heart don't receive enough oxygen as a result of OSA. This generally leads to increased blood pressure and heart rate, and can put you at greater risk of heart attack and stroke. Other associated disorders are diabetes, heart disease, and obesity. Sleep apnea can also affect your waking hours by causing you to be fatigued. Fatigue has been linked to a host of physical and psychological ailments.

Solutions for Sleep Disorders

The most common treatment for those suffering from OSA is something called the Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) system. This device has successfully treated many people,

and is considered the standard of care in sleep medicine. Unfortunately, some studies estimate compliance to be as low as 29% since it can be rather bulky and difficult to sleep with. If you are NOT compliant with your CPAP, then your sleep apnea is NOT being treated properly.

Your dentist may have an alternative for non-compliant CPAP users, which includes a custom appliance that opens the airway and reduces snoring. This innovative appliance is considerably more comfortable (with a 90% compliance rate) and much easier to travel with than a bulky CPAP machine.

Not all Sleep Appliances are the Same

I do caution against self-treatment because one-size-fits-most sleep apnea appliances can hurt, not heal. An incorrect appliance can cause patients to experience headaches and jaw pain. When we made new, precisely measured sleep appliances based on their personal muscle physiology, their symptoms were relieved and their sleep issues improved with greater predictability.

Patients love the comfort of the appliance and most importantly, love how well rested and good they feel from wearing it. Because OSA is a potentially dangerous condition, if you believe you may suffer from it, please consult with your physician or dentist.

Dental Tip of the Month

Consult with your physician or dentist today if you suspect you have a snoring or sleep apnea problem.

Heart Attacks are the #1 killer for men and women in the world. With more and more information connecting sleep apnea with heart disease, it is estimated that in five years as many as 50% of all heart attacks will be attributed to undiagnosed sleep apnea.

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