

Is Snoring

driving you crazy?

by: Dr. Bruce Bosler

Before You Seek Counseling... See Your Dentist!

Picture this, you are peacefully enjoying a deep, restful sleep and maybe even dreaming of relaxing on a sunny beach listening to the ocean waves gently lap against the sandy shore. You're feeling relaxed and peaceful. Then, just like the nerve-racking jolt of the morning alarm clock, your spouse starts to snore!

At first, you try to ignore the chainsaw noise of the snoring. You close your eyes between breaths and think the intrusion has stopped. But then it starts again, and with every snarl you become more and more frustrated and unable to sleep.

Millions of people throughout the world suffer from the effects of snoring and OSA (obstructive sleep apnea) and about that same number suffer from the effects of second-hand snoring as innocent by-sleepers. Isn't it amazing that your dentist has the magic remedy in a simple oral appliance that feels very much like an orthodontic retainer!

Tired During the Day & Quality of Sleep

The quality of your sleep affects your daily activities and has a huge impact on the overall quality of your life. If you are not getting an adequate amount of sleep during the night, due to heavy snoring, then you and your body may suffer from sleep deprivation and be prone to daytime sleepiness. This may affect you:

- Productivity and performance at work
- Increase your risk for injury or illness
- Cause strain in personal relationships
- Be a sign of a more serious health problem

When the jaw opens and the tongue falls into the back of the throat, the airway narrows forcing air through the smaller opening. This creates vibrations in the throat known as snoring. Although snoring seems physically harmless, it can be a red flag for a much more serious and sometimes fatal condition called obstructive sleep apnea (OSA).

A man named John was responsible for a fatal car accident. He personally survived the head-on collision, but the others were not so fortunate. He was emotionally devastated and could not forgive himself for falling asleep at the wheel. But John suffered from undiagnosed obstructive sleep apnea. His body was starved for sleep. He often fell asleep at work or in meetings. He was unaware of the potentially deadly effects of this condition.



Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA)

Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) occurs when the airway completely collapses blocking airflow into the lungs. The harder one tries to breathe, the tighter the airway seals. This airway obstruction persists until the brain partially awakens the person. Unconsciously, people will close the jaw returning the tongue and throat to a normal position.

The sleep apnea cycle – falling asleep, jaw relaxing, airway collapsing, unconsciously awakening with a gasp, falling back asleep, can repeat itself one time per minute or more in severe cases. With a blocked air passage, one does not receive enough oxygen. Both the awakenings and oxygen deprivation can then trigger other health problems.

Sleep apnea can cause:

- Chronic Sleepiness
- Strokes
- Heart Attack
- Heartburn
- Morning Headaches
- Depression
- High Blood Pressure
- Impotence

How Can My Dentist Help?

Oral appliances prescribed by your dentist are worn in the mouth to treat snoring and obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). These devices are similar to orthodontic retainers or sports mouth guards. Oral appliance therapy involves the selection, design, fitting and use of a custom designed oral appliance that is worn during sleep. With an oral appliance, the jaw is repositioned forward, allowing air to flow freely through your throat. Oral appliances may be used alone or in combination with other means of treating OSA. These means include general health, weight management, surgery or continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP).

Your dentist will work with your physician to determine whether an oral appliance is right for you to put an end to sleep deprivation and to improve your quality of life. ■

This article was written by Bruce Bosler, a dentist with 27 years of experience helping people sleep better at night. Dr. Bosler's practice is located at 301 Alamo Dr., Suite A-2 in Vacaville. He can be reached at 707-449-3661. For more information on sleep apnea, visit his website at www.CaliforniaSmiling.com

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-Walt Disney



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