

Snoring/Sleep Apnea

Is Snoring Keeping You Awake?

Did You Know?

24% of men and 18% of women suffer from snoring.

60% of men and 40% of women over the age of 60 snore (female snoring increases after menopause).

Loudness of snoring may reach as high as 90db (85db is considered hazardous noise by The Workers' Compensation Board!)

Stanford University sleep researchers found that 75-80% of the patients they see are diagnosed with obstructive sleep apnea.

A CAA official stated that as much as 50,000 auto accidents happen in Canada as a result of sleepy drivers. Many of which suffer from obstructive sleep apnea.

What is Obstructive Sleep Apnea?

With Obstructive Sleep Apnea, muscles of the soft palate at the base of the tongue and the uvula (the small conical, fleshy tissue hanging from the palate) relax and sag, obstructing the airway, making breathing laboured and noisy snorting). Collapse of the airway walls blocks breathing entirely. When breathing periodically stops, a listener hears the snoring broken by pauses. As pressure to breath builds muscles of the diaphragm work harder. Sleep is then temporarily interrupted, sometimes only for seconds. This, in turn, activates throat muscles and "uncorks" the airway.

The effort is akin to slurping a drink through a straw that is stuck in a lump of ice cream. A listener hears deep gasping as breathing starts. With each gasp, the sleeper awakens, but so briefly and incompletely that he or she does not remember doing so in the morning. Someone with obstructive sleep apnea may stop breathing for ten seconds or more...dozens, even hundreds of times each night, thus resulting in daytime sleepiness.

Symptoms of OSA

There are many symptoms that could indicate obstructive sleep apnea. These symptoms listed here are only a partial representation and should not be the only criteria used to diagnose OSA:

- Clouded intellect
- Short term memory impairment
- Morning headaches
- Generalized muscle pain
- Irritability Mood swings
- Impaired judgment
- Decreased sex drive

What Can Your Dentist Do to Help?

The good news is that Oral Appliance Therapy has proven to be very successful in the management of snoring and mild to moderate obstructive sleep apnea. A dental appliance is a small plastic device, similar to an orthodontic retainer, or an athletic mouthguard. It is worn in the mouth during sleep to prevent the soft throat tissues from collapsing and obstructing the airway. Dentists with training in dental appliance therapy can prescribe these special appliances to meet their patients individual situations and conditions.