

SNORING

What is snoring?

Snoring is noisy breathing during sleep. It can happen when you are breathing in or breathing out.

How does it occur?

Snoring occurs when air cannot flow smoothly through your air passages. It can also occur when there are structures in your air passages that vibrate while you breathe. Some causes of snoring include:

- Sleeping on your back.

Sleeping on your back allows your tongue to fall backward into your throat. Your tongue then partially blocks your throat, making a smaller passage for air. Also, your tongue may vibrate and make noise as air passes over it.

- Having a blockage in your nose

A blockage can occur from a deviated septum, allergies, a common cold, or a sinus infection. It can also happen after injury that changes the shape of your nose or nasal passages.

Allergies can cause enlargement of your adenoids (tonsil-like tissue at the back of your nose, where the nose joins the upper throat). Enlarged adenoids can also cause snoring by blocking your airway and vibrating while you breathe.

- Gaining weight

Gaining a large amount of weight can also cause or worsen snoring. The air passages become smaller by the accumulation of fat under the tissue lining the airway and by the increased pressure of a heavy chest on the airways.

- Using some types of medication or alcohol

Using drugs that cause excessive relaxation or sedation can also cause snoring. These drugs include alcohol, sleeping pills, antihistamines, and pain medication (especially narcotics).

- Having sleep apnea

Snoring can be a sign of a sometimes dangerous condition called sleep apnea. Having sleep apnea means that you have periods of no breathing, sometimes as long as 30 seconds, when you are sleeping.

This can happen many times during the night. It often interrupts your sleep and can prevent you from getting good-quality sleep. These episodes of no breathing cause you to get less oxygen and can sometimes have serious complications, such as chronic heart and lung disease. Symptoms of sleep apnea include snoring, being constantly fatigued, and frequently falling asleep during the day. If you

have these symptoms, you need to see your health care provider. They will often recommend a “sleep study” where you spend the night at a facility and your sleep patterns, oxygen levels, heart rhythms, etc... are monitored.

How is snoring treated?

If there is an obvious cause of snoring, then eliminating the cause often helps reduce the snoring.

Possible solutions include:

- Losing weight
- Using medication to unclog your nasal passages
- Sleeping on your side or stomach
- Having no alcohol before bedtime

Sometimes raising the head of the bed or mattress can help prevent snoring. This should be done by making the top of the mattress or bed frame higher than the foot of the bed. Do not use more pillows, which can kink your airway and cause more breathing problems.

A simple nonprescription device is available at pharmacies called Breathe-Right. It is a piece of plastic that puts slight pressure on the bridge of the nose and is held in place by an adhesive tape. It helps keep your nasal passages open during sleep. Many people find Breathe-Right helpful, but it is relatively expensive, costing about \$1 per night because a new one must be used each night. It might be a solution for special occasions.

How is sleep apnea treated?

Sleep apnea is treated with a special apparatus called a CPAP or nasal biPAP machine. This is worn at night while you are sleeping to help keep the airway open and prevent apneas. Although many patients find this very cumbersome and uncomfortable, the benefits of using it greatly outweigh the inconvenience. Occasionally, your doctor may recommend surgery for sleep apnea. Not all patients with sleep apnea will benefit from surgery.

Ask your health care provider for additional help with your snoring or sleep problems.

Special Instructions: