

# Ask an **EXPERT**

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## DENTIST

### QUESTION:

**Did you know that your dentist could stop your snoring and possibly save your life?**



**ANSWER:** It's camping time and we are off with the boys to the great outdoors. This is summer's super activity and we are off into the wilderness. The hike is strenuous, all of us more or less, out of shape, the packs - way too heavy, but the extra food, the cool nights, the stars, the chance to see a bear, the strange sounds of the night all make the anticipation worth it. Camp is set up, food cooked, a quick dip in the lake, and it's time to turn in. The boys in their tents, they scream, they shout at one another, rough house for a while and then crash. The leader's tent is silent in moments there is serous sleeping to do, the night sounds creep in, the howl of a distant coyote, the wind stirs the pines, and then the snoring! Snoring is funny until it takes over your night, and that of your spouse. It's like being married to a smoker. How do you get away from the 'second hand smoke' or in this case snoring?

Most of us believe that snoring is a male thing, but in reality there is almost as many snoring women as men. As we get older and gain weight, the soft tissues in the back of your throat begin to vibrate as air is forced through a passage that is too small- resulting in snoring. Many couples report that snoring is a problem with their relationship and can result in sleeping in separate rooms. Light or medium occasional snoring is not dangerous to your health, but more aggressive snorers actually have obstructive sleep apnea. When they snore, their throat tissues completely collapse (lets bring on CPR and the 'First Responders') causing a temporary obstruction of the airway, temporarily cutting off all breathing. Obstructive Sleep Apnea's severity is measured by how many instances of Apnea (stopping breathing) or hypopnea (shallow breathing) happen in one hour.

The recurrent episodes of apnea produce lowered oxygen levels and elevated intra-thoracic pressures. These physiologic changes contribute to increases in Hypertension, Coronary Artery Disease and Stroke events. Sleep apnea contributes to daytime sleepiness, diminishes job performance and leads to an increase in the frequency of motor vehicle accidents. The cognitive capabilities of patients with sleep apnea decline as well. If you suffer from Obstructive Sleep Apnea:

- You are 4 times as likely to have heart attack.
- You are twice as likely to die in your sleep.
- You are seven times more likely to have a motor vehicle accident.
- You have a 40% greater risk of having depression.
- You are more likely to have sexual impotence and develop diabetes.

Whether you snore or you know someone who does, there is help. While there are at-

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home snoring remedies, your best chances for treating snoring is to seek professional help. After fully evaluating your situation, a dentist can help you choose the right snoring treatment for you. The primary treatment for sleep apnea is a device called a CPAP. We all know people who use them. CPAP stands for Continuous Positive Air Pressure delivered through a nasal mask. The air pressure acts as a pneumatic splint supporting the soft tissues in the back of the throat. While it does eliminate snoring, which unfortunately has been considered a cosmetic problem by insurance companies up until now, its primary use is to control (OSA) obstructive sleep apnea.

While CPAP <http://snoringisntsexy.com/cpap-mask-problems-onecolumn.cfm> is always effective, it is not always well tolerated by patients. Skin irritation from the nasal mask, claustrophobia, air leakage and inconvenience are all reasons why many people just don't like their CPAP machines and why compliance is often low. That's where your dentist, or at least dentistry as a profession, comes into the picture... It turns out that specially educated and trained dentists can construct, fit and manage a small, comfortable device that fits in the mouth that can control snoring and sleep apnea. Dentistry has developed well over 80 small oral appliances, much like two-sided sports mouth guards, that can accomplish support of the airway in back of the tongue. These devices move and hold the lower jaw in a forward position preventing collapse of the airway during sleep. The devices are well tolerated by most patients.

Are you a mild, moderate or severe OSA? Your spouse will tell you that you're the worst, but we have a way of measuring your severity and making recommendations and appropriate referrals to qualified medical personal. For the mild to moderate patient our dental office can offer you many alternatives and choices that will give you and those around you a great nights rest.

No matter what type of snoring treatment you choose, the important thing is that you take care of your problem before it affects your health. Call us at 435-753-7563 to get started on your snoring treatments today.

Your Neuromuscular Dentist  
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