

# Snoring and Sleep Apnea



The foundation of good health is a good nights sleep!

Without a good nights sleep, your body does not recover from the days activities. Snoring and sleep apnea can have devastating effects on your health, your work and your relationships.

## SLEEP APNEA

Apart from snoring (and the relationship problems that can go with it), the first signs of Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) that many people notice is falling asleep easily in the daytime — in front of the TV, at work or on public transport. Others catch themselves nodding off behind the wheel, an event that becomes a literal wake-up call that something is very wrong.

### Symptoms of Obstructive Sleep Apnea include:

- Poor concentration
- Depressed mood
- High blood pressure
- Forgetfulness
- Night sweats
- Morning headaches
- Weight gain
- Lack of energy
- Reduced sex drive
- Frequent urination at night

### What is Sleep Apnea?

Obstructive Sleep Apnea is a serious and relatively common condition. 750,000 Australians have problems with their health due to Obstructive Sleep Apnea. It has been linked to:

- High blood pressure
- Heart failure
- Work accidents
- Diabetes
- Car and truck accidents
- Stroke

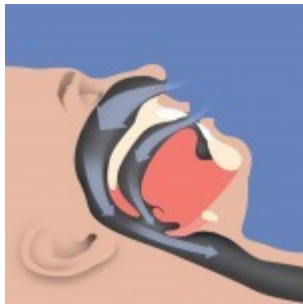
There are two main types of sleep apnea; Obstructive Sleep Apnea and central sleep apnea. 85% of people with sleep apnea have Obstructive Sleep Apnea. It is caused by the muscles in the back of your throat relaxing and interfering with your breathing while you sleep.

The good news is that successful OSA treatment can relieve the symptoms and reduce the long-term risks to your health.

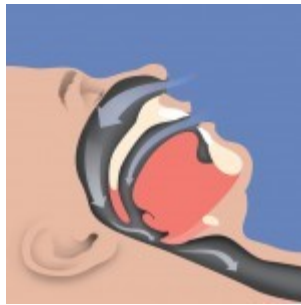
### What causes sleep apnea?

When you go to sleep, the muscles at the back of your throat relax. When this happens, your airway can narrow or close as you breathe. Because your airway is partly blocked, snoring results. If the airway becomes completely blocked, you can't get any air into your lungs.

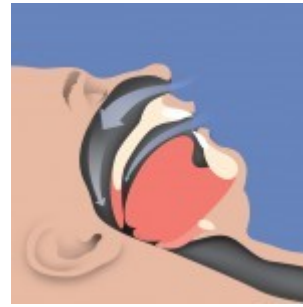
This can happen many times a night without you being aware of it. You may think you have slept all night. But obstructive sleep apnea causes poor quality sleep and often results in sleepiness during the day. Your brain responds to the low oxygen level in your blood by briefly waking you from sleep so that you can take a breath. Your partner may notice that you make a gasping or choking sound.



Normal airway



Narrowed airway snoring



Obstructed airway

## **SNORING**

Snoring is a very common condition that affects both men and women. Anyone who has been on the receiving end of someone who snores, knows how disruptive it can be to a good night's sleep. Snoring is LOUD! In fact, the loudest recorded snore is 87 decibels, which is louder than a vacuum cleaner, and almost as loud as a lawnmower.

Snoring is particularly frustrating because the snorer is normally completely unaware of the problem. They continue to sleep soundly while anyone within earshot has a sleepless night. As well as being a problem for a sleeping partner, snoring can also be a warning sign of obstructive sleep apnea. Obstructive sleep apnea has some serious implications for your health, so it's important to exclude this as the cause of your snoring before deciding on treatment.

### **Causes of snoring**

When you go to sleep, the muscles at the back of your throat relax. When this happens, your airway can narrow or close as you breathe. With your airway partly blocked a vibration occurs and snoring results. Snoring can be made worse by sleeping on your back, having a narrow or blocked nose, or having a small lower jaw. Drinking alcohol (especially near bedtime) and certain medications, can contribute to snoring. Cigarette smoking, which can irritate the nose and throat, is often blamed also.

### **Should I get my snoring checked out?**

If you snore, you should see your dentist have a sleep study done to make sure you don't have obstructive sleep apnea. If the answer is yes to any of the following, your risk is increased:

- I snore loudly
- I feel sleepy or fall asleep during the day
- I am male
- I'm told I stop breathing while I sleep
- I am told I make gasping or choking sounds while I sleep
- I have high blood pressure
- I am overweight
- I am over 50
- I have a large neck size

### **Snoring treatment**

If your dentist or GP thinks your snoring may be a sign of obstructive sleep apnea, he or she may ask you to undertake a sleep apnea assessment. This can be done at home and we can provide you with the details needed to arrange this assessment.

Treatments for sleep apnea often work for snoring too, even if you don't have diagnosed sleep apnea. In addition, snoring can be treated with other techniques, including laser treatment.

One of the simplest treatments for snoring is a sleep appliance. Worn in your mouth while you sleep, a sleep appliance moves your lower jaw forward to prevent your tongue and the soft tissue in your mouth falling back and blocking your airway while you sleep.