



Snoring

Fact:
Snoring disrupts both the bed partner and the snorer.

Fiction:
It's a myth that snoring is always just a "stuffy nose."

Prevention:
Sleep problems may be prevented with lifestyle and environmental changes.

Treatment:
Sleep apnea can be treated.

Snoring may be temporary or may present cause for concern.

Understanding Snoring

A head cold or allergies can cause congestion that leads to snoring. A change in sleeping position can cause snoring, too—many people are more likely to snore when sleeping on their backs. But sleep apnea can be more than annoying; it can be life threatening.

With sleep apnea, sleep is disrupted many times during the night when breathing stops for 10 to 30 seconds at a time. There are two kinds of sleep apnea:

- Obstructive sleep apnea, in which air cannot flow in or out of the person's nose or mouth
- Central sleep apnea, which is less common, and occurs when the brain doesn't send the right signals to start the breathing muscles

In either case, the sleeper is totally unaware of his or her struggle to breathe.

Symptoms of Snoring

Generally, snoring only causes a dry morning throat and dirty looks from the bed partner. But loud snoring and substantial daytime sleepiness can indicate sleep apnea.

Prevention

A decongestant before sleep can help relieve snoring from an allergy or head cold. A comfortable sleep environment can also prevent snoring. But snoring related to apnea generally cannot be prevented without treatment.

Diagnosis and Treatment

A doctor specializing in sleep disorders can diagnose sleep apnea and recommend treatment. Diagnosis may include overnight observation in a sleep clinic. This involves spending a night hooked up to a polysomnograph in a sleep lab to electronically measure brain waves, eye movements, muscle activity, heartbeat, blood oxygen levels and respiration.

Treatments include learning to sleep in the correct position, breathing devices that

help keep airways open, medication and surgery.

Tips for the Best Night's Sleep

Relaxation and comfort can help create a good night's sleep. Seek:

- Relaxation, especially at bedtime
- Use of your bed only for sleep or sex, not work, reading or other activities
- An unchanging sleeping environment
- Comfortable pajamas

Avoid:*

- A heavy meal before bedtime
- Alcoholic beverages
- Caffeine
- Cigarette smoking
- Exercise before bed
- Noise and bright lights
- Hot bath or shower before bed
- Time zone or altitude changes

* IntelliHealth

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