

By Kathleen Collins, DDS



# New Insights into Adult Snoring

Simple snoring is annoying at the least, but oftentimes it is a symptom of an underlying and more serious disease called obstructive sleep apnea. If you are tired or sleepy while sitting and reading, watching television, sitting in a car at a stoplight or you feel like lying down after noon, what you feel might be considered excessive sleepiness.

An initial evaluation by your MD or dentist can get you started to a better night's sleep. Your dentist is part of the sleep team because some factors causing snoring and airway obstruction originate inside the mouth and require a dentist's expertise. Factors that may affect the airway are the size and shape of the tongue and soft palate, the position of the jaw, the presence of tonsils, adenoids, and uvula. During sleep, the soft palate relaxes and the lower jaw and tongue fall back, oftentimes closing off the airway. Breathing ceases temporarily until air is forced through the occupied space causing the soft palate to resonate and snoring results. When the decision has been made that a custom-made oral appliance is the preferred option, the lab fabricates two upper

and lower custom-fitted acrylic trays that are linked together and worn during sleep. The oral appliance is successful because it keeps the lower jaw and tongue in a forward position thus maintaining an open airway.

Most patients can wear an oral appliance, but contraindications and side effects do occur. Short and long-term side effects can include excessive salivation, dry mouth, pain in certain teeth, tooth mobility and movement, dislodgement of crowns, TMJ pain and allergic reactions to the tray material.

The science of sleep medicine has brought to the forefront the connection between overall health and a healthy night's sleep. Ask your dentist or MD if you or the ones you love are concerned about your snoring or other potentially harmful sleeping habits. **HB**

For more information on this topic, please contact Kathleen A. Collins, D.D.S. by phone at (714) 887-0444 or visit [www.surfcitysmiles.com](http://www.surfcitysmiles.com).

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