

THE INS & OUTS OF ORAL APPLIANCE THERAPY

WHAT IS SLEEP APNEA?

Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) occurs when the soft tissue in a person's throat repeatedly collapses and blocks the airway during sleep.

These partial reductions and complete pauses in breathing typically last between 10 and 30 seconds, but can persist for one minute or longer. These pauses can happen hundreds of times a night, leading to abrupt reductions in blood oxygen levels.

The brain alerts the body to its lack of oxygen, causing a brief arousal from sleep that restores normal breathing. The result is a fragmented quality of sleep that often leads to excessive daytime sleepiness.

Most people with OSA snore loudly and frequently, with periods of silence when airflow is reduced or blocked. They then make choking, snorting or gasping sounds when their airway reopens.

HOW DOES ORAL APPLIANCE THERAPY WORK?

Custom made oral appliances reposition the tongue and lower jaw forward during sleep to maintain an open airway. Dentists trained in dental sleep medicine know how to select, fabricate, fit, and adjust these devices, which look like mouth guards, to help patients breathe freely during sleep.

Follow-up visits and post-adjustment sleep studies help dentists determine if oral appliance therapy is effectively treating their patients' sleep apnea.

Dentists are not permitted to diagnose sleep apnea. Diagnosis should be done at an accredited sleep center (www.sleepcenters.org).

WHO SHOULD USE AN ORAL APPLIANCE?

Oral Appliance Therapy is indicated for mild to moderate OSA patients if they prefer it to Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP), the standard treatment therapy, cannot tolerate CPAP, or are unable to use positional therapy or weight loss to control their apnea.

Oral appliances are also recommended for severe OSA patients if they cannot tolerate CPAP. Patients with severe OSA should always try CPAP before considering oral appliance therapy.

HAVING TROUBLE WITH CPAP?

Did you know that 25 to 50 percent of sleep apnea patients do not comply with or tolerate CPAP?

GET CONNECTED

Follow the AADSM blog (<http://aadsm.blogspot.com/>) to touch base with other sleep apnea patients and learn about the latest research in oral appliance therapy.

UNTREATED OSA INCREASES YOUR RISK FOR:

- Excessive daytime sleepiness
- Driving and work-related accidents
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Depression
- Memory loss
- Morning headaches
- Irritability
- Decreased sex drive
- Impaired concentration