

Put Snoring To Rest

Did you know that up to half of all adults in Dallas are likely to be affected by snoring? Many adult snorers are plagued by restless sleep, morning headaches, daytime fatigue, behavioral problems, social anxieties or sexual dysfunction. And their spouses suffer the same effects (unless he or she has already moved to another bedroom).

Problem snoring is more frequent in males and overweight persons, and it usually worsens with age. Habitual snorers, and those who must endure their nighttime cacophonies, have long assumed nothing could be done for this condition and essentially put up with it. Ear plugs and extra couches are found in almost every snorers home!

“But help is on the way”, says Rajiv Pandit, M.D., an Ear, Nose and Throat Surgeon at Methodist. An examination by our ENT physicians can reveal if the snoring is caused by nasal obstruction, a flaccid palate, or enlarged adenoids. Once properly diagnosed, there are various treatments that can put an end to sleepless nights.

People who snore may suffer from:

- Poor muscle tone in the tongue and throat.
- Excessive bulkiness of throat tissue.
- Long soft palate and/or uvula.
- Obstructed nasal airways, including a deviated septum.
- Elevated blood pressure and heart enlargement.
- Sleep Apnea.

When loud snoring is interrupted by frequent episodes of totally obstructed breathing, it is known as obstructive sleep apnea. Serious episodes last more than ten seconds each and occur more than ten times per hour.

Historically, medical treatments for snoring and sleep apnea have included a nasal mask that delivers air pressure into the throat, or surgery. “However, now for many patients, general anesthesia and a trip to the operating room are no longer necessary”, says Dr. Rajiv Pandit. New office based procedures have made it possible to effectively treat many snorers and mild sleep apnea patients with safe, essentially painless therapy. These procedures, if appropriate after being diagnosed by an ENT physician, are designed to be permanent and will provide almost immediate relief for both the snorer and the ones who have endured the “loud nights”.

One of these procedures is called “Injection Snoreplasty.” This technique involves the injection of a scarring solution into the upper palate of the mouth, resulting in increased firmness of the palate. With a firmer hard palate, airflow through the mouth becomes less turbulent, and therefore less noisy. “The soft tissue of the upper palate moves during snoring, causing the sound we all hear,” says his partner, Dr. Bryan Serkin. “So by stiffening the upper palate, the tissue will not move, and air escapes through the mouth silently during sleep. From start to finish, the Injection Snoreplasty procedure takes us about 15 minutes to complete in our office,” says Dr. Serkin.

Another, newer office-based treatment for snoring is the “Palatal Implant” procedure. “Three tiny implants are inserted into the soft palate,” says Dr. Pandit. “Like with the Injection Snoreplasty, the palate becomes stiffer, and snoring is improved.” One of the advantages of the Palatal Implant procedure is that it can also be reversed if the patient wishes to do so in the future.

In addition to these office-based procedures, there are many other treatments that an ENT surgeon can use to effectively treat snoring and/or sleep apnea. So, better sleep for you and the ones around you is just around the corner! If you or a loved one suffers from snoring or sleep apnea and would like more information on available medical treatments, please consult Rajiv Pandit, MD or Bryan Serkin, MD, ENT physicians with offices at Methodist Dallas and Methodist Charlton. They can be reached at 214-946-3687.

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