

Health Enews



Health Dangers of Snoring

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Snoring is a common condition that can affect anyone and occurs when the tissue in your throat relaxes and vibrates as the air you breathe in rushes past the soft tissue. In fact, it is estimated that more than 40 million Americans snore.



Causes of Snoring

- *Stuffy nose.* Anything that stops you from breathing through your nose can make you snore, like a cold or allergies.
- *Sleep posture.* Sleeping on your back can make you snore or make it worse. Try sleeping on your side to improve snoring.
- *The shape of your nose.* If the thin wall between your nostrils didn't quite form properly, one side can be smaller. This is called a deviated septum.
- *The shape of your mouth.* If the upper part of your mouth toward your throat—the soft palate—is low and thick, it can narrow your airway and make you snore.
- *Medications.* Sedatives, muscle relaxants, and some antidepressants can relax your tongue and the muscles in your throat and cause you to snore.
- *Sleep apnea.* Sleep apnea causes you to stop breathing as you sleep and can make you gasp for breath or wake during the night. Sleep apnea is linked to stroke, high blood pressure, and heart disease.
- *Obesity.* Being overweight can cause bulky throat tissue, narrow the windpipe and cause snoring.
- *Smoking and alcohol.* Smoking and using alcohol can lower muscle tone in the upper airways and cause snoring.

Health Risks Associated with Habitual Snoring and Sleep Deprivation

- *Strain on the heart.* Prolonged suffering from obstructive sleep apnea often results in higher blood pressure, enlargement of the heart, and higher risk of heart attack and stroke.
- *Low oxygen levels in the blood.* Low oxygen levels in the blood can lead to constricted blood vessels in the lungs and eventually lead to pulmonary hypertension.
- *Atherosclerosis.* Atherosclerosis is the hardening or clogging of the arteries. Heavy snoring can increase your risk of hardened carotid arteries by 10 times.
- *GERD (Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease).* GERD is a chronic digestive disease in which the stomach acids back up into the esophagus and irritate the lining. Because of the disordered way a snorer sleeps, stomach acid can back up into the esophagus during sleep and irritate the lining of the esophagus.
- Chronic headaches, obesity, daytime sleepiness, irritability, poor memory, depression, mood swings, hallucinations, and fatigue.

Ways to Prevent Snoring

- Speak with your physician as you may need to be tested for sleep apnea. There has been advancement in CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machines and oral devices that can treat sleep apnea.
- Sleep on your side, not your back.
- Quit smoking. This reduces inflammation and swelling in the airway, which may contribute to the narrowing of the airway.
- Raise the head of your bed 4-6 inches. Sleeping at a slight incline can prevent the tongue from falling toward the back of the throat and contributing to a blocked or narrow airway.
- Promptly treat breathing problems, such as a stuffy nose caused by a cold or allergies.
- Do not eat a large meal at night. A full stomach can push against your diaphragm, further hindering your ability to breathe easily.
- Avoid drinking milk before bedtime. Milk can make snoring worse since it forms a mucus layer over your throat and tongue.