



Your Smiles Make Us Smile

June 2009

Welcome Terry!

Is There More to Snoring Than Meets the Eye (or the Ear)?

People who snore loudly are often the target of bad jokes or elbow thrusts in the middle of the night, but loud habitual snoring is not a laughing matter. For many men, women and even children, it may signal a serious, potentially life-threatening disorder called **obstructive sleep apnea, or OSA**.

Snoring is caused by a partial blockage of the airway during sleep due to the relaxation and sagging of muscles in the tongue and throat. This sagging narrows the airway and makes the soft tissue in the back of the mouth and throat vibrate with incoming air, making the sound we call "snoring."

It's estimated that 30% - 50% of the U.S. population snore at one time or another, but snoring does not always equal OSA. OSA occurs when the airway becomes blocked during sleep and breathing stops or is interrupted. Some people may experience hundreds of episodes per night and not ever remember any of them or even be aware that they have OSA, especially if they live alone. **Wood Creek Dental is now offering preliminary screening for patients who suspect they have undiagnosed OSA.**

Have OSA But Can't Tolerate Traditional CPAP Therapy?

Your Wood Creek Dental team is trained to also offer customized, oral appliance therapy for those who have already been diagnosed but struggle with the use of continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP machine). Oral appliance therapy has proven effective in treatment for mild to moderate sleep apnea and has even shown success in some cases of severe apnea.

"Anytime I ever sleep without my CPAP machine, I always wake up with a horrific headache and feel so tired the entire day. However, I was going on vacation and didn't want to be bothered with packing up my machine and then trying to find distilled water for it. I also didn't want my vacation ruined with headaches and fatigue. I contacted Dr. Hunt about the possibility of trying an oral appliance for my sleep apnea. I was a little concerned that I might not be able to sleep with something in my mouth, but since the first night of wearing it, I've been able to sleep all night without any problems. It didn't take any getting used to. Best

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of all, I wake up “headache-free” and feel rested in the mornings. I know it is working for me!”

--WCD Patient Alice H.

Symptoms of Sleep Apnea

- Snoring with pauses in breathing
- Gasping or choking during sleep
- Nighttime chest pain
- Poor judgment - can't focus
- Morning headaches
- Restless sleep
- High blood pressure
- Excessive daytime fatigue

One of the chief complaints of individuals with OSA is with that of **daytime drowsiness**. This is more than your occasional “feeling tired.” To accurately assess your level of daytime drowsiness, we will use **The Epworth Sleepiness Scale**, which is widely used by sleep professionals to measure sleep deprivation. You may take your own evaluation at <http://www.sleepeducation.com/SleepScale.aspx>, or we can quickly assess your score at your next office visit.

Wood Creek Dental is excited about this opportunity to enter the field of **Dental Sleep Medicine**...where dentistry and medicine once again meet together for improving the overall health and well-being of our patients. If you'd like to talk to us about any concerns you may have regarding snoring and obstructive sleep apnea, please give us a call. We will be glad to answer your questions or schedule a time to give you or someone you love a preliminary evaluation.

Wood Creek Dental, PA

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