

Snoring Could Signal Sleep Apnea

It's easy to make light of someone who snores so loudly they keep the neighbors up. But "sawing logs" isn't just a funny character trait — someone who snores could have sleep apnea, a common sleep disorder. The three main indicators of sleep apnea are loud snoring, gasping for breath repeatedly during the night and feeling tired even after a full night's sleep.



Sleep apnea can be detrimental to one's health and it is often linked to heart problems, depression and weight gain.

If you or someone you love is snoring instead of catching some peaceful Zzzs, the following tips can help.

What to do when sleep isn't restful

There are two types of sleep apnea, which include obstructive sleep apnea, where the airway is blocked during sleep, usually by relaxed throat muscles, and the less common central sleep apnea, where the brain doesn't transmit the proper signals to the breathing muscles. Both conditions cause the sleeper to stop breathing momentarily. This usually causes the sleeper to gasp for breath, and awaken briefly. While you don't usually notice you've woken up, this pattern can prohibit you from reaching a deep sleep and cause you to feel tired in the morning.

If you think you might have sleep apnea, talk to your doctor and see if a sleep study might be right for you.

If you are diagnosed with sleep apnea, the first step may be lifestyle changes. These include:

- Losing weight
- Quitting smoking
- Sleeping on your side or stomach instead of your back
- Avoiding alcohol

If none of these methods work, your doctor might want you to try a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machine. A face mask delivers air pressure throughout the night to keep your air passages open. It helps relieve snoring and apnea. There are also oral devices from your dentist that can help. In more extreme cases, surgery might be recommended.

Don't ignore the snore

When you're not sleeping well, all aspects of your life can be affected, including your health. If you aren't getting the restful sleep you need, talk with your primary care physician.