



Snoring: The Hidden Dangers of Sleep Apnea

"Laugh and the world laughs with you; snore and you sleep alone!"

◀ Rande H. Lazar, MD

There is plenty of truth (and humor) in that old joke, but it speaks to a common and potentially dangerous truth: At best, your snoring (or that of a loved one) can be annoying. At worst, it can be deadly.

"Snoring is a vibratory mechanism that occurs when air passes through the nose or mouth and encounters an obstruction like a relaxed soft palate or a too-long uvula," says Dr. Rande Lazar, an ENT specialist whose team at ENT Memphis has been treating adults and children for decades.

"There are two types of snoring—the kind that is an independent mechanism, and the kind that accompanies obstructive sleep apnea, a condition in which the obstruction results in pauses in breathing lasting from a few seconds to a few minutes," Lazar continues. "Sleep apnea can be associated with fatigue, high blood pressure, increased risk of heart attack and stroke, and other conditions."

Is It Snoring or Sleep Apnea?

Factors that contribute to both snoring and sleep apnea include: anatomy (a narrowed airway, for example), girth (more overweight people snore than fit people), smoking, family history, gender (more men snore than women), and age (as many as 80 percent of men and 60 percent of women over the age of 60 snore).

An ENT will make a diagnosis by performing a full physical and reviewing the patient's medical history. Patients will also likely take part in a sleep study that measures snoring and how often and for how long breathing ceases.

Treatments

Once diagnosed, there are several ways to treat both snoring and sleep apnea: A continuous positive airway

Children can also be afflicted with snoring and sleep apnea, and their symptoms can be a little different than those of adults. Children may exhibit the following:

- daytime fatigue
- behavioral issues
- crankiness
- bed-wetting

The prescribed treatment in children is usually surgery to remove the tonsils and adenoids. Such surgery usually cures children of their snoring or sleep apnea, and their recovery times are faster than in adults.

**Children,
Snoring, and
Sleep Apnea**



pressure machine (or CPAP), surgery, or a combination of the two are the recommended treatment options for adults.

A CPAP is worn while sleeping. It forces air to push the palate down, effectively removing any obstruction.

"Of the people who can tolerate it, 85–90 percent see significant improvement," Lazar says. "But it must be worn every night, and some people can't tolerate it."

Those who can't tolerate the CPAP may undergo surgery to remove the tonsils and adenoids, remove excess uvula tissue, or repair a deviated septum.

Another option—and potentially the best option—is to make lifestyle changes such as losing weight.

"Weight loss can help or even cure sleep apnea," says Lazar. "But it can recur.

Patients must be committed to diet and exercise; without the commitment, it will be a lifelong battle."



Se habla español.

Dr. Lazar sees patients in Memphis, Bartlett, and Dyersburg. Call **901-821-4300** to schedule an appointment, or visit **ENTMemphis.com** for more information.