

Silent Night?



Does your partner keep you up half the night sounding like a bulldozer or a freight train? You aren't alone. Almost half of adults snore occasionally, and 25% snore regularly. Occasional snoring is not dangerous, but chronic snoring may require medical attention. Snoring can be stressful on a relationship and leave a bed partner fatigued, but it can also be an indication of a more serious problem.



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So who is most affected by chronic snoring? Men and people who are overweight are more likely to be habitual snorers, and the condition generally gets worse with age. Regular snoring has many causes, from having too much neck tissue to a deviated septum and, in rare cases, pressure from cysts or tumors. Snoring disrupts normal sleeping patterns, leaving the snorers, and often their partners, without an adequate amount of rest. Other possible health consequences of snoring include headache, stroke, heart disease, arrhythmia, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), injury due to increased daytime sleepiness, mental health issues, reduced sexual satisfaction, fetal complications, nocturia (needing to get up to use the bathroom two or more times per night), and sleep apnea.

It is important to have an otolaryngologist (ENT) help your partner determine the cause of his or her snoring, as it can be an indication of obstructed breathing, such as sleep apnea, which can cause long-term health problems. Obstructive sleep apnea, or OSA, is a condition in which a sleeper has several breathing pauses that last 10 seconds or longer because of a narrowing or collapse in the upper airways. This causes less oxygen to make it to the bloodstream, so the heart must work harder. People with OSA can have between 30 and 300 of these episodes per night and are 40% more likely to die early than those without the condition! Untreated, OSA can increase your partner's risk of heart attack, stroke, and diabetes. In some cases, your doctor may need to perform a sleep study to determine whether the snoring is caused by OSA.

The doctor may wish to know what positions your partner sleeps in (and whether or not the snoring occurs in all of them), the frequency of snoring, and whether the snoring lasts throughout the night or causes your partner to ever wake up.



Watch for the following signs in your partner and share them with your doctor to help with a diagnosis:

- Episodes of gasping or long pauses in breathing during sleep
- Feeling fatigued or unrested during the day
- Changes in attention, concentration, or memory
- Morning headaches
- High blood pressure or heart disease
- History of stroke

Don't continue to listen to your partner's nighttime orchestra! Visit your physician to determine the best wellness plan for your family.



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