

Snoring: Causes and Cures

JUST ABOUT EVERYONE snores occasionally. Even a baby or a beloved pet may snore! But snoring can affect the quantity and quality of your sleep, leading to daytime fatigue, irritability and increased health problems. And, if your snoring is so loud that your bed partner can't sleep, you may end up being banished from the bedroom!

HOW TO STOP SNORING:

- Sleep on your side
- Elevate the head of your bed
- Limit alcohol and medications
- Clear your nasal passages
- Lose weight

You may find that your snoring persists even after trying these changes. If your snoring results from a more serious cause, a cure may be more complex – but there are solutions. Your nights don't have to be noisy. It also makes sense to try some simple non-invasive treatments first to see if they will reduce or prevent your snoring...

THE CAUSES OF SNORING

Where does the snore sound come from? Snoring is caused by a narrowing of your airway, either from poor sleep posture or abnormalities of the soft tissues in your throat. A narrow airway gets in the way of smooth breathing and creates the sound of snoring. People who snore often have too much throat and nasal tissue, or "floppy" tissue that is more prone to vibrate. The position of the tongue can also get in the way of smooth breathing.

TIP: THE WAY YOU SNORE MAY REVEAL WHY YOU SNORE! IF YOU SNORE

- With your mouth closed: a problem with the tongue is probably the culprit
- With your mouth open: your snoring is likely related to the tissues in your throat
- Only on your back: your snoring is probably mild – improved sleep habits and lifestyle changes may be effective cures
- In all sleep positions: your snoring is more severe and may require a more comprehensive treatment

SNORING RELIEF: SELF HELP TIPS AND REMEDIES

Tip: The tennis ball trick

Do you sleep on your back? Try to sleep with a tennis ball (or any ball of approximately the same size) attached to the back of your pajama top. You can safety-pin a sock to the back of the pajama top, then put a tennis ball in it.) The tennis ball is uncomfortable if you lie on your back, and soon you will develop side-sleeping as a habit and not need the tennis ball.

- Lose weight Even a little bit of weight loss can reduce fatty tissue in the back of the throat and decrease snoring.
- Sleep on your side.
- Elevate your head – Try elevating the head of your bed four inches, which may make breathing easier and encourage your tongue and jaw to move forward. Sleep without a pillow (or with a specially designed pillow) to make

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sure your neck muscles are not cramped.

- Avoid certain foods, alcohol and medications before bed
- Alcohol and certain medications increase relaxation of throat and tongue muscles, which makes snoring more likely. Sleeping pills or tranquilizers may help you sleep, but they will also relax your muscles and increase the chance of snoring. High-fat milk products or soy milk products cause mucus to build up in the throat which can lead to snoring as well.
- Clear your nasal passages - Having a stuffy nose makes inhalation difficult and creates a vacuum in your throat, which in turn leads to snoring. Nasal decongestants or nasal strips may help you breathe more easily while sleeping. Antihistamines can help with allergies, but will relax throat muscles and cause snoring.

DENTAL APPLIANCES

Dental devices, which often resemble the mouth guards worn by athletes, can help open your airway by bringing your lower jaw or your tongue forward during sleep. They are very effective and may be the easiest remedy for some people. Most dental devices are acrylic and fit inside your mouth - A dentist specializing in sleep disorders can help fit you for one of these devices. Surgery if all else fails!



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