

Ask Dr. Huff....



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According to a recent study, snoring can kill you. Snoring can cause damage to the walls of the carotid arteries and increase the risk of strokes. In fact, 30,000 deaths due to a medical condition called sleep apnea that is common among snorers occur each year!

It is estimated that about 70% of all Americans snore, and the majority of these have some degree of sleep apnea.

What causes snoring? When people sleep, the muscles at the back of the throat and of the soft palate relax and reduce the size of the upper airway and act as vibrating noisemakers. Alcohol, sedatives, and obesity can make snoring worse. Sometimes, this obstruction is so severe that it causes a momentary total blockage of air. When this happens, the person subconsciously awakes to take a breath, which makes a good night's sleep virtually impossible. When this occurs five times or more a night, this is indicative of obstructive sleep apnea. This can be life-threatening if untreated.

Symptoms of sleep apnea include chronic

fatigue, obnoxious snoring, the need to use several pillows at a time to sleep, feeling tired upon waking in the morning, insomnia, chronic hypertension, and spontaneous falling asleep during the day. If you or someone you know has any of these symptoms, you should ask your physician or dentist to refer you for a sleep study. This is a medical test that is done in a hospital setting over night while the patient sleeps. A diagnosis of sleep apnea cannot be made nor ruled out without this test.

There are several home remedies that you can try if you are a snorer.

Be sure to go to bed when you are tired. Do not drink caffeine or exercise vigorously before going to bed. Sleep on a regular schedule.

Take a hot bath before bedtime. If these do not work, sometimes finding another position to sleep may reduce snoring.

However, if none of these techniques are effective, you should definitely be screened for sleep apnea. Once a clear diagnosis is achieved, there are several options for treatment that range from C-PAP machines that force oxygen into your lungs to surgery.

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