

What Is Snoring?

Snoring is the sound that is made when the tissues of the throat vibrate against one another. This occurs because the muscles of the throat relax during sleep allowing the airway to narrow. Snoring occurs in nearly everyone at some point in their life. About 25% to 50% of adults have regular (habitual) snoring.

What Are the Possible Problems With Snoring?

Snoring can disrupt your bed partner's sleep. In worse cases, snoring can even affect the sleep of people outside of your bedroom. This disrupted sleep can have effects on the bed partner's ability to function during the daytime. For the snorer themselves, this can be bad for relationships or be embarrassing. Some people think of snoring as a problem without health concerns. There does seem to be a link between snoring and certain health problems. One example is narrowing of blood vessels in the neck in people who snore. Narrowing of blood vessels can cause problems like a stroke.

When Is Snoring Sleep Apnea?

Snoring is a common sign of a condition called obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). Obstructive sleep apnea is also caused by airway narrowing during sleep. In addition to the sound of snoring, there are drops in oxygen and brief wake ups from sleep. Breathing may be completely blocked at times. Obstructive sleep apnea can cause day-to-day problems such as sleepiness and mental fog. Obstructive sleep apnea can also cause long-term health problems such as increased risk of high blood pressure, heart attacks, strokes, and diabetes. Making sure that snoring is not OSA is therefore very important. This is easily done with a sleep study, which can be done at home or in a sleep lab. This can be ordered by many different types of doctors such as your primary care physician, a sleep medicine expert, or an otolaryngologist (ear, nose, and throat professional or "ENT"). Snoring without OSA is called primary snoring.

What Are the Treatments for Snoring?

Treatment is not necessary in many patients with primary snoring. This is because they do not have a bed partner, or the snoring does not bother them or their bed partner. In others, measures, such as weight loss, avoiding back sleeping, and avoiding alcohol, can reduce snoring. Some snoring improves with closed mouth breathing by using a chin strap, lip taping, and improving nasal breathing with nasal sprays or nasal dilators. When these treatments are not effective, some use mouth guards (oral appliance therapy) or a sleep apnea machine (positive airway pressure therapy). Lastly, there are

Author: Phillip Huyett, MD

Published Online: January 26, 2023. doi:10.1001/jamaoto.2022.4615

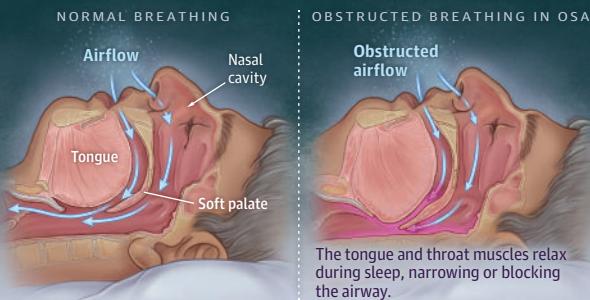
Author Affiliation: Massachusetts Eye and Ear, Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts.

Conflict of Interest Disclosures: Dr Huyett reported personal fees from Inspire Medical Systems outside the submitted work.

Section Editor: Samantha Anne, MD, MS.

Snoring is the sound caused by tissues in the throat vibrating against one another when the muscles of the throat relax during sleep.

Snoring is a common sign of **obstructive sleep apnea (OSA)**, a condition that also causes interrupted breathing, gasping, low oxygen levels, and subsequent daytime sleepiness. OSA is diagnosed or ruled out with a sleep study conducted at home or in a sleep lab.



Snoring is not always associated with OSA. Snoring without OSA is called **primary snoring**. Treatment for primary snoring is not always necessary, but several actions can reduce snoring.

- Weight loss
- Avoid back sleeping
- Avoid alcohol
- Use of a chin strap
- Lip taping
- Use of nasal sprays or nasal dilators to improve breathing



Use of a mouth guard, continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) therapy, or surgical procedures may also help primary snoring.

surgical procedures for snoring. These can be done in the office or operating room, depending on your particular case.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

American Academy of Sleep Medicine

<https://sleepeducation.org/sleep-disorders/snoring/>

The JAMA Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery Patient Page is a public service of *JAMA Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery*. The information and recommendations appearing on this page are appropriate in most instances, but they are not a substitute for medical diagnosis. For specific information concerning your personal medical condition, *JAMA Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery* suggests that you consult your physician. This page may be downloaded or photocopied noncommercially by physicians and other health care professionals to share with patients. To purchase bulk reprints, email reprints@jamanetwork.com.