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## Arrowhead Lakes Dentistry Newsletter

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[Snoring](#) is the sound you make when you breathe through your nose and mouth while you are asleep. That's pretty obvious. It happens when air doesn't move smoothly through the air passages making the soft tissue in the throat vibrate.

The sound of snoring comes from the uvula, the back of the tongue and the other soft tissues of the throat flapping as air passes over them when you breathe during sleep. It's very much like the sound a flag makes when it waves in the wind. This can happen even when the tissues are normal size because when you fall asleep the muscles in the throat, soft palate and uvula relax.

Airway blockage is the root cause of all snoring problems. When you snore, your airway is partially blocked by the soft tissues in the back of the throat, the back of the tongue and by the soft palate and uvula. This causes a decrease of air flow to the lungs. A decrease in air flow causes a lack of oxygen to the brain.

### Who Snores?

At the very minimum, at least 30% of adults snore on a regular basis and up to 50% snore occasionally. Men snore more than women at a ratio of 2:1 but women do snore. Snoring increases with increasing age and increasing weight. Allergies, asthma, colds and sinus infections increase the risk of snoring.

Drinking an alcoholic beverage before you go to sleep, being overweight, smoking or overeating all can make the problem worse as can some medications like muscle relaxants. In some people simply sleeping on their back can cause snoring.

### Medical problems associated with snoring

- Repeated deprivation of oxygen to the brain can cause high blood pressure which can damage the carotid arteries on each side of the neck. The carotid arteries carry oxygen to the brain. The damage can lead to the

development of cholesterol and calcium containing plaque which further restricts blood flow to the brain and can lead to stroke.

- A report from the University of California School of Dentistry found that 21% of men who snore had hardened blockages in their carotid arteries.
- [Obstructive Sleep Apnea](#).
- And now a new study has shown that loud snoring itself can have devastating consequences. An article published in March, 2008\* stated that loud snorers had 40% greater odds of having hypertension, 34 % greater odds of having a heart attack and 67 % greater odds of having a stroke than people who did not snore. [\*American Academy of Sleep Medicine (2008, March 1). Snoring Linked To Cardiovascular Disease, Increased Health-care Utilization.]

So what you can do about snoring

- Avoid sleeping on your back. Sewing a tennis ball into the back of a T-shirt and wearing that as pajama tops will help to prevent rolling over on your back
- Raise the head of the bed 4 inches or so
- Lose weight
- Avoid drinking alcohol within 3 hours of bedtime. Do not take a drink to help you fall asleep.
- Stop smoking
- Avoid medications that relax the muscles (if possible)
- Don't eat a heavy meal within three hours of bedtime
- Ask your bed partner to wake you if you snore
- Exercise to improve your physical condition
- Try nasal strips or nasal dilators to keep the nostrils open
- Ask us about your snore problem and a [stop snoring oral appliance](#) to help stop snoring and control sleep apnea.
- If the problem is really severe and/or if you stop breathing during sleep get checked by a sleep physician. He or she may recommend an oral appliance, a CPAP machine or surgery.

If you believe you or a family member might have obstructive sleep apnea, we would be happy to refer you to a sleep physician for proper diagnosis. If you have been diagnosed with sleep apnea and would like further information about an oral sleep appliance, we can help. If you have any further questions concerning the information of this article (information for this article courtesy of [snoringisntsexy.com](#)) or any other dental concerns, please visit our [website](#) or give our office a call at 623-362-9616. We would love to answer any questions.

We wish you good health,  
Sincerely,

Ronald Shelley DMD  
Arrowhead Lakes Dentistry PC

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