

Healthwatch: Are You Catching ZZZ or Sawing Logs?

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We've probably all suffered through at least one miserable night of listening to someone's snoring—whether it's in the tent in the next campsite, or your own spouse lying right next to you. That annoying noise which can be as loud as "sawing logs" is simply caused by vibrations of tissues as air flows through the throat.

Factors that contribute to snoring include: Alcohol ingestion, bedtime tranquilizers or sleeping pills, smoking, deviated septum, nasal congestion due to allergies or infections, thyroid problems, excess weight, enlarged tonsils or adenoids, a bulky tongue, and a receding or small jaw.

Some measures you can take to control snoring include: lose weight, avoid sleeping on your back, avoid drinking alcohol at night or taking bedtime sedatives, and treat colds and allergies.

You might consider trying one of these over the counter remedies to minimize snoring: nasal or oral decongestants, nasal strips which reduce snoring by lifting and thus opening the nasal passages, and throat sprays which lubricate throat tissue and minimize tissue vibrations that cause snoring.

If you are known to be a loud snorer, you may be suffering from obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), a significant and potentially serious medical problem that can affect your wellbeing.

The most common signs of OSA are loud snoring, disrupted sleep, witnessed apnea (breath holding or gasping type breathing) and excessive daytime sleepiness. OSA frequently goes undiagnosed because individuals may be unaware of their snoring or sleep patterns. A polysomnography, or sleep study, is the most accurate method of diagnosing OSA. Home sleep studies cost much less but are not as accurate.

Treatments include weight loss, nasal continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) and dental devices that modify the position of the tongue or jaw. Upper airway and jaw surgical procedures may also be appropriate in selected patients. The most common cause of OSA in children is enlarged tonsils, and remains as one of the few medical reasons to remove tonsils and adenoids.

Do You Have Sleep Apnea?

If you snore excessively and have any of the additional problems listed below, you may have sleep apnea. Please consider discussing a sleep evaluation with your doctor.

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|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Do you snore loudly? | Yes | No |
| 2. Does your bedroom partner complain about your snoring? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Yes | No |

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 3. Does your snoring wake you up at night? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 4. Do you or your bedroom partner notice that you make gasping and choking noises during sleep? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 5. Do you have a dry mouth, sore throat or headache in the morning? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 6. Do you often fall asleep during the daytime when you want to stay awake? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 7. Are you often tired during the day? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 8. Do you have high blood pressure? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

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