

# Snoring and Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA)



Dentists training at Las Vegas Institute in designing oral appliances to help Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) left to right Local dentist, Dr. Shandrick, Clinical instructor, Dr. Anna Maree Cole, and Massachusetts dentist, Dr. Konstantin Ronkin

Apnea means to stop breathing. Sleep apnea refers to a condition wherein you stop breathing during sleep. Most of us know someone who snores during sleep. While snoring is often made the subject of jokes and teasing, it could be an indication of a serious problem. The severity and danger associated with sleep apnea ranges from snoring that irritates your partner to life-threatening medical conditions. If the apnea involves physical obstruction of the upper airway it is sometimes referred to as Sleep Disordered Breathing (SDB). Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) is the most common type.

OSA describes an effort to breathe, but there is a physical obstruction of the airway causing apnea. It may be caused by a collapse of the soft tissue at the back of the throat, sometimes related to the inability to properly breath through your nose. If the jaw is too small to accommodate the tongue, the tongue has a tendency to fall back, further restricting your airway. This constriction impedes airflow as you inhale and exhale, and the soft tissue of the throat vibrates creating the sound of snoring. In more severe cases, when apnea occurs - you literally stop breathing for 10 seconds or more, causing blood oxygen levels to fall forcing the heart to work harder, causing blood pressure to rise. These disturbances in the sleep cycle can cause high blood pressure, obesity, heart disease, gastric reflux, depression and diabetes.

**More common signs and symptoms of Sleep Apnea include:** Snoring, Waking up tired, Dry mouth/throat, Difficulty Concentrating Fatigue, Weight Gain, Sleepiness, Irritability

Diagnosis of sleep apnea should start with a medical evaluation. Talk to your dentist or family physician that can refer you to a qualified physician with specialized training in the field of sleep medicine. Evaluation can range from an examination of your airway to an overnight sleep study called a Polysomnogram (PSG).

In some cases, surgery to remove obstructions may be recommended as treatment. For cases of severe sleep apnea, Continuous Positive Airways Pressure (CPAP) is often the first choice. This means wearing a mask while sleeping that maintains a positive air pressure, pushing air into your lungs. Properly trained dentists can also make custom fitted oral appliances that are worn over the teeth at night to prevent the jaw from falling back during sleep, keeping the airway open.

Local dentist, Dr. Robert Shandrick has studied Obstructive Sleep Apnea at the Las Vegas Institute for Advanced Dental Studies (LVI) Shandrick utilizes Myotronics J5 TENS unit and K7 computer jaw analysis software to ideally position the jaw, and to fabricate physiologically designed oral appliances called Mandibular Advancing Devises (MAD) that assist breathing during sleep, at Shandrick Dental Care Studios, Rt 93 Sugarloaf, PA (570-788-1870)