

Snoring

Information and Advice for Patients

Introduction

Snoring is a very common problem. Some people snore all their lives but there are certain factors which can increase your chances of snoring:

Weight

This is the most important factor. Excess fat, especially around the neck area, squashes the airway and the muscle tone may not be sufficient to prevent it from narrowing. Simply losing excess weight can drastically reduce or even stop snoring.

Smoking

Cigarette smoke irritates the lining of the nose causing it to swell and produce excess catarrh. This results in nasal congestion leading to mouth breathing and, as previously explained. Mouth breathing increases the likelihood of snoring.

Alcohol/sleeping tablets

Excess alcohol (especially late night drinking) causes a reduction in the tone of the muscles that keep the airway open, leading to airway collapse, vibration and snoring. The same is true of sleeping tablets.

Medical conditions

Any condition causing the nose to become blocked, for example a cold, hay fever, polyps or a broken nose will result in mouth breathing, thereby increasing the likelihood of snoring. This is normal.

Snoring can also be a sign of sleep apnoea, which is a condition where people are not getting enough oxygen into their blood when sleeping. This will be assessed by your GP and you may be referred for a sleep study.

Treatment

There is no single treatment for snoring that has been proven to work. There are multiple devices on the market that you can buy to help snoring – some work for some people but not others. None are available on the NHS.

Your dentist may be able to supply you with a mandibular repositioning device but there will be a charge for this service.

Lifestyle changes such as stopping smoking, losing weight and reducing alcohol consumption may considerably improve or even cure the problem.

Adopting a suitable sleeping position may also help. Most people snore whilst lying on their backs so lying sleeping on your side or propping yourself up on pillows may help.

Referral

If you have daytime nasal blockage or your voice has changed at the same time as you started to snore then you should be referred for an ENT assessment.

If you have a normal nasal airway and your voice has not changed, then it is unlikely that you have an underlying condition relating to your snoring. If this is the case and you have no other ENT issues then it is not appropriate for you to be seen in an ENT clinic.