

Snoring

By Suze Hargraves

You're lying in bed wide awake. Your partner is peacefully asleep. You're contemplating calling the Environmental Protection Agency and reporting your snoozing partner for noise violations. Birds that used to roost outside the bedroom window have moved to the city in search of peace and quiet. Despite your devotion to the person next to you, you are, in your sleep deprived brain, plotting ways to silence them. The snoring has got to stop.

Snoring is a recognized "sleep disorder". It affects not only the person who sleeps with the snorer, but also the snorer themselves. WebMD reports that forty-five percent of adults snore occasionally, while 25% are considered habitual snorers. They list four major causes of snoring:

- **Obstructed nasal airways:** Partially blocked nasal passages require extra effort to transfer air through them while sleeping.
- **Poor muscle tone in the throat and tongue:** Throat and tongue muscles can be too relaxed, which allows them to collapse and fall back into the airway.
- **Bulky throat tissue:** Being overweight can cause bulky throat tissue. Also, children with large tonsils and adenoids often snore.
- **Long soft palate and/or uvula:** A long soft palate or a long uvula (the dangling tissue in back of the mouth) can narrow the opening from the nose to the throat. When these structures vibrate and bump against one another during sleep, the airway becomes obstructed causing snoring.

Some of the health effects of snoring are obvious while others are not. Sleep deprivation for the snorer's bed partner is one of the obvious problems, but less obvious are the sometimes serious consequences for the snorer. WebMD reports that, for the snorer, "Blood oxygen levels are often lowered, which causes the heart to pump harder and blood pressure to rise. The result is a poor night's sleep, which leads to drowsiness during the day and can interfere with the person's quality of life. Prolonged suffering from obstructed sleep apnea will result in higher blood pressure and may cause enlargement of the heart, with higher risks of heart attack and stroke." Read more about sleep apnea at <http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/sleep-apnea/>.

There are some pretty imaginative snoring remedies out there. Unfortunately, unless you know the underlying cause of chronic snoring, you're not likely to find a long term solution over-the-counter without wasting a lot of money. Occasional snoring can often be remedied with some basic sleep habit changes; maintain a healthy weight, don't eat at least four hours before bedtime, avoid sedatives at night and try not to sleep on your back. If none of these basic changes work, you need to speak with your healthcare provider.

As anyone who sleeps with a snorer knows, sleep deprivation is serious stuff. If you're not getting the sleep you need because of your own snoring or someone else's there are things that can be done. Talk to your healthcare provider.

And please remember; if you sleep with a snorer, no matter how good it may sound to your sleep deprived brain, snoring is not a legitimate felony defense in a court of law.