

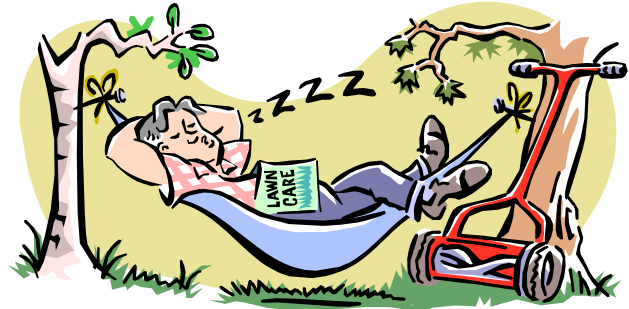


BREATHE EASY

Do You Snore?

“This Quiz May Save Your Life”

Snoring occurs in 90 million Americans over the age of eighteen; 37 million snore habitually. Although it occurs in both genders, it is almost twice as likely to occur in men. Approximately 30% of 30 year old males snore and by age 50 around 40% of all Americans will snore.



Snoring occurs when the uvula and/or soft palate vibrate against the throat or the tongue. It usually happens more during inhalation than exhalation. Snoring occurs more commonly in men, people who are obese, those with a large tongue or uvula, or those with a receding chin. Children can snore as well, often due to enlarged tonsils or adenoids. Several things can make snoring worse including alcohol, tranquilizers, anti-histamines, and even some medications used to treat high blood pressure and prostate disease. Nasal congestion secondary to a “cold”, allergies, or irritation can also worsen snoring.

Although in many individuals snoring is not a reason for alarm, in some it could be a symptom of a more serious underlying condition-obstructive sleep apnea.

Obstructive sleep apnea affects about 4% of women and 9% of men between the ages of 30 and 60. Although it is more common in those who are overweight, it can occur in people of normal weight and even children.

Obstructive sleep apnea occurs when the muscles that support the soft tissue in the throat relax, especially during the deeper stages of sleep. In some people, this causes the airway to narrow-sometimes to the point of closing off. When the airway closes, apnea (periods of no air movement) occurs and blood oxygen levels begin to drop. This is often noted by the spouse as quiet periods followed by louder snorting or choking sounds as the person resumes breathing. This may happen 30 or more times each hour resulting in very poor sleep quality.

Symptoms that may accompany sleep apnea include fatigue, daytime sleepiness, irritability, high blood pressure, morning headaches, and difficulty concentrating.

Talk to your doctor if you have loud snoring and other symptoms of sleep apnea (see our sleepiness quiz). Testing called a polysomnography can be performed to determine

