

Kid's KOrner

Snoring Is No Joking Matter

WASHINGTON — Cartoonists and comedians still get a lot of mileage out of snoring, but for millions of people it's no laughing matter.

Besides straining marriages and endangering friendships, snoring can be deadly serious. A severe form, known as sleep apnea, leaves people exhausted the next day and in extreme cases can cause death.

During periods of sleep apnea, breathing is totally obstructed for periods of a few seconds to more than a minute. Threatened by the lack of oxygen, the sleeper partially awakens, tightens up flabby throat tissues, and, with a loud snorting sound, takes a big gulp of air.

"This can happen as many as 300 times a night," says Dr. David N. F. Fairbanks, a clinical professor who does ear, nose, and throat surgery at George Washington University Hospital in Washington.

Dangerous Malady

"Because the heart beats irregularly during these episodes, people with heart problems and lung disorders such as emphysema are at serious risk," says Fairbanks. "We think that as many as 3,000 Americans may die each year from the disorder."

Far more prevalent are the millions of people who, because of the problem, never get a good night's rest. They constantly fall asleep on the job or, even worse, behind the wheel of a car or truck.

"I never believed my wife when she told me I had a serious sleep problem," one patient told Fairbanks. "Then one day I was taking my Boy Scout troop on a camping trip and started to go off the road. They woke me up just in time."

Dr. Richard E. Waldhorn, a pulmonary specialist at the Georgetown University School of

Medicine in Washington, says his secretary can usually diagnose people suffering from sleep apnea just by observing them in his waiting room.

"Many of them are so pooped they fall asleep while trying to fill out their medical information forms," says Waldhorn.

In contrast, children suffering from the disorder are usually hyperactive during the day. They become anti-social, get into fights, and have trouble learning and concentrating at school.

"Removing the tonsils and adenoids usually does wonders for these kids," says Fairbanks. "A tremendous change usually takes place after this relatively simple operation, because removal of the bulky structures improves the airways."

More Serious for Adults

Curing adults is more difficult because the disorder is usually caused by more serious airway obstructions.

In normal snoring, the air flow is partially obstructed in the collapsible part of the airway where the tongue and upper throat meet the soft palate and the uvula, the fleshy structure that dangles from the roof of the mouth back into the throat.

The rumbles, wheezes, and growls that drive bed partners to other rooms occur when these structures strike against each other and vibrate during breathing. The noise stops intermittently during sleep-apnea episodes, because the air is blocked by an excess of tissue in one or more of the airway structures.

In the past few years, doctors have perfected a new surgical procedure that widens and stiffens the throat by removing and tightening tissue in the upper



Technician Sherry Gaines monitors a patient at the Sleep Disorders Center of the Scripps Clinic and Research Foundation in La Jolla, Ca. One of the most common problems encountered at such centers is sleep apnea, a severe snoring disorder characterized by abnormal breathing. Experts estimate about 20 varieties of this fundamental problem affect more than 20 million Americans, sometimes with fatal consequences.

airway.

"It's the equivalent of a tummy tuck or a face-lift where you take out the excess and flabby flesh and tighten up the rest," explains Fairbanks. "This procedure has cured about 80 percent of the heavy snorers and half the apnea patients."

For people who don't want surgery or haven't been helped by it, there's a new breathing machine. It directs pressurized air through a face mask to keep the upper airway open. But it, too, can send bed partners scurrying to the guest room. It sounds like a vacuum cleaner.

Serious snorers can easily outdo a vacuum cleaner. One man immortalized in the Guinness Book of World Records recorded 87.5

decibels, louder than a diesel engine in the back of a big bus.

But heavy snorers can take some consolation in knowing that many political leaders also have been noisy sleepers. Winston Churchill was recorded doing 35 decibels, and Benito Mussolini was known as an astounding snorer.

Roosevelt Disturbed Patients

At least 20 American presidents are believed to have been loud snorers, says Fairbanks. Theodore Roosevelt probably achieved the most notoriety. During his stay at one hospital, almost every person in his wing asked that the president be moved elsewhere.

Almost half the adults in the United States snore occasionally, and a quarter are habitual. Males

and overweight persons make up the majority of snorers, but the noisemaking increases as people get older. By age 60, about 60 percent of men and 40 percent of women snore.

Doctors are convinced that most snorers can be helped without drastic surgery. Some of their suggestions:

Exercise daily to develop muscle tone and lose weight; avoid alcoholic beverages within two hours of bedtime; don't take tranquilizers, sleeping pills, or antihistamines before retiring; sleep on the side rather than on the back; tilt the bed by placing bricks or other objects under the bedposts at the headboard.

COLOR THIS!

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|-----------|---------------|
| 1. BLACK | 6. ORANGE |
| 2. PEACH | 7. GREEN |
| 3. YELLOW | 8. LT. BROWN |
| 4. BLUE | 9. LT. BLUE |
| 5. BROWN | 10. LT. GREEN |

BALTIMORE ORIOLE - THIS BRILLIANT COLORED MALE IS A SHOWY BIRD. THE FEMALE IS A DULL ORANGE YELLOW WITH TWO DALE WING BARS. THE BULLOCK ORIOLE OF THE WEST IS LIKE THE BALTIMORE BUT HAS ORANGE ON SIDES OF THE HEAD AND OVER THE EYES. THEIR NESTS ARE A WORK OF ART.

