

What Can I Do About Snoring?

The suggestions listed below help many people decrease or eliminate snoring. Since snoring is as unique as you are, a suggestion or combination of suggestions that works better for you may not work as effectively for a friend or spouse. Please follow up directly with your health insurance carrier to determine if it provides any coverage for expenses related to the treatment of snoring.

1. Weight loss

Even for people who are only a little overweight, a small weight loss can lead to a surprising reduction in snoring. If you noticed your snoring worsen during a time of weight gain, it is very likely that weight loss will help reduce your snoring. The general rule of thumb: a 10 percent decrease in weight will be a good start.

2. Keep off your back during sleep

Many people only snore – or snore harder – when sleeping on their back. *A fanny pack with several padding-covered tennis balls*, worn at the back during sleep can be an easy, inexpensive solution. The pack acts as an “automatic elbow” every time you roll onto your back. If the pack shifts during the night, try fastening the belt of the fanny pack to the waistband of your shorts or underwear to keep it from moving out of position. Another option is a *snore relief cushion* – a wedge-shaped inflatable cushion worn like a backpack that prevents you from rolling onto your back. These cushions are quite comfortable to wear and very effective in keeping people off their backs during sleep.

3. Avoid alcohol within several hours of bedtime

Alcohol worsens snoring in most people.

4. Chin Straps

Keeping your mouth closed during sleep may decrease snoring. Many types of chin straps are available online. Be sure that you choose a wide chin strap or “double straps” for stability on your head throughout the night.

5. Keep your nasal breathing as clear as possible

If you have allergy problems, especially to things that are around year round (pets, dust), use your allergy medicine on a regular basis to keep your nose as clear as possible. If you have allergies but are not on allergy medicine, talk to your doctor. Nasal strips can also help with congestion.

6. Oral appliances

Oral appliances made specifically for snoring can be very effective. There are a number of FDA-approved appliances for the treatment of snoring or sleep apnea. The appliances are somewhat similar to a bite block, but are designed to hold your jaw forward while sleeping. This holds your tongue forward and enlarges the soft, fleshy air passage in the back of your throat, which can decrease or stop snoring. You can only get these oral appliances from a dentist. They may not be appropriate to use if you have significant TMJ problems or if you wear dentures or braces. Talk to your dentist about these appliances. If your dentist does not typically

continued

What Can I do about Snoring?

prescribe and fit these appliances, ask where he or she usually refers patients for these appliances. Costs vary among the different appliances and even among different dentists.

7. Nasal CPAP mask and machine

CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) machines are commonly used for treatment of sleep apnea but do an excellent job of stopping snoring as well. CPAP equipment is not typically covered by health insurance carriers without a diagnosis of sleep apnea (*Remember: talk to your health insurance carrier!*). If you want to pursue using CPAP equipment at your own cost, it may be available online at very reasonable prices. Your doctor will need to write a prescription for the vendor to set the level of airflow on the machine. If snoring continues while using CPAP equipment at that prescribed setting, the pressure can be increased without having to send it back to the vendor.

8. Surgery

There are several surgical options for treatment of snoring. The most common procedure is somnoplasty, an outpatient procedure that shrinks and stiffens the tissues in the back of your throat. This procedure is performed by an otolaryngologist (an "ear, nose and throat" or "ENT" specialist), and only local anesthesia is necessary. A newer procedure is called the Pillar Procedure. During a Pillar Procedure tiny implants are placed into the uvula ("punching bag") and up into the soft palate. This stiffens the uvula and palate, making them less likely to vibrate while breathing and thereby decreasing snoring. If you are interested in surgery to reduce your snoring, make an appointment with an ENT specialist to discuss your specific questions.

Additionally:

Be cautious of anti-snoring sprays or pillows. Many patients tell us they tried these remedies and simply wasted their money!

All of these suggestions are helpful to many people for decreasing or eliminating snoring. The suggestion with the highest likelihood of success is CPAP equipment (#7) – but like everything else, it only works if you use it!