

This can be described as heavy breathing which sounds like snorting when asleep.

What to look for

- Unusual breathing patterns during sleep.

Snoring is usually harmless although very annoying for the person who has to hear it. It can be loud and continuous throughout the whole time a person is asleep. Or it can occur only in certain positions. It can vary in pitch and intensity or be the same every night. Each case is individual. However, sometimes snoring can be a dangerous medical condition called obstructive sleep apnoea.

If you have this condition, you stop breathing during the time you are asleep. There is not enough oxygen getting in the blood this can cause tiredness or if prolonged can cause death. Go to your doctor if you think you have this problem.

Causes

Snoring is involuntary. It happens when the snorer breathes through their mouth and the muscles of the soft palate relax. The passages are narrowed and as the air is drawn into the lungs, the soft palate vibrates.

Usually this happens when the muscles that allow breathing become too relaxed. This can be due to too much alcohol, medications, an overly soft or large pillow; sleeping on your back, poor muscle tone or obesity.

It can also be a physical problem you may have been born with. Asthma and smoking can also lead to obstruction and snoring.

Traditional Treatments

It is always wise to visit your doctor to rule out any possible major disorders. However, normally snoring is something that you can fix at home by eating well, losing weight if you need to and giving up smoking. Drinking less alcohol will help as well.

Surgery is a possibility but only when the obstruction is severe.

Prevention

- Keep to your ideal weight
- Make sure you eat early in the night and do not drink alcohol before going to sleep.
- Stop smoking.
- Sleep on your side.

When to seek further advice from a professional

- you live with a snorer and you notice there are times when his breathing actually stops.