

Night Appliances are only Part of the Solution

While CPAP remains the gold standard of care for obstructive sleep apnea, many cannot tolerate its use. Some find it simply feels too awkward to wear. For others the result is a dry throat that leads to coughing. Others find it interferes with their social interaction with their partner. It is not sexy to have a hose shooting out from your face, held by straps that circumnavigate your head. For the sleep partner, the woosh of the airflow provided by the CPAP unit is just as disturbing as the snoring it is meant to treat.

The other issue is that breathing problems are not delegated only to the hours spent trying to sleep. It is an issue of survival, to get enough oxygen, the primary requisite for the organism to live. And this is a 24/7 operation. Disturbed breathing results in the expression of our fight or flight response. It causes the release of adrenalin which results in feelings of edginess, commonly misinterpreted as feelings of stress. The body also responds by altering one's posture to enable us to breathe more easily. It does this by changing our posture, most notably moving our head forward. This postural change has far reaching effects on the rest of the body, pinching nerves and causing chronic pain in the back of head, neck, shoulders, back, and even down into the legs. Adrenalin release also raises the pressure in organs such as the heart, resulting in high blood pressure, increasing risk of stroke, as well as a whole host of other health issues. Disturbed sleep and daytime breathing problems can alter emotional responses. Who hasn't felt short tempered after a poor night's sleep. Now compound this and you can understand the combined effect of sleep deprivation and the release of adrenalin when there is no threat but your brain's inability to get enough oxygen. Many patients suffer from TMJ issues. Studies are beginning to help us understand that TMJ, once thought to be the result of stress or estrogen imbalance, is really the body's way of trying to posture for more air. This makes a lot more sense. Because what we are seeing clinically are also changes in the surface of the tongue and bony ledges on the inside of the lower jaw and in some cases the palate. New findings suggest these have developed in order to guide the tongue forward and up to open the airway space for more oxygen.

You're getting the picture now and I want you to sit back and think about this and see if it makes sense to you. Remember, the brain wants enough oxygen. Once you give it enough, it relaxes and goes on to other important issues. How do you feel when you go from a threatening situation to a non-threatening one? Same thing.

I do nothing more than help provide better airway space by utilizing mandibular repositioning oral appliances, a standard of treatment for obstructive sleep apnea as well as patent pending OSB ® appliances. The goal for both are the same. The designs however, are significantly different. Your physician is there to treat your medical problems, my appliances are chosen and custom designed and adjusted to help your doctor, chiropractor, physical therapist, etc. to achieve better results.

Another thing I wish to bring to your attention is that chronic disordered breathing is not just an adult problem. It can affect children as well. Kids can have apnea. They tend to also suffer from day time sleepiness and fatigue, perform poorly in school because they can't concentrate. The cause we believe is the same. That is insufficient oxygen getting to the brain because of oral and nasopharyngeal (back of throat) airway blockage by the tongue and surrounding structures.

So much to think about, I know. But think about it you must. Sounds like Yoda (from Star Wars?)

I am here to help -----It's a matter of life and breath.