

Chapter 8

Sleep Disorders



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Normal Breathing During Sleep

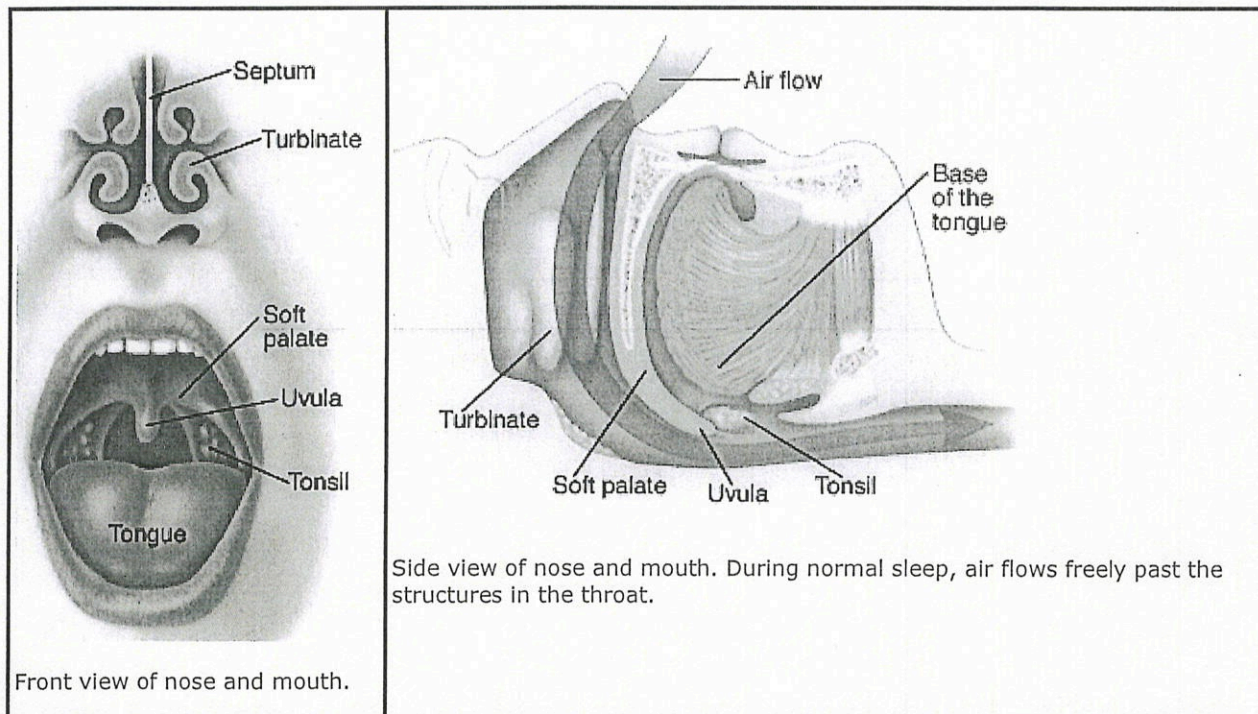
When you breathe, air travels through passages in your nose and throat. When these air passages are wide enough to let air flow freely, you breathe normally.

Nasal Structures

The **septum** is the wall that divides the left half of the nose from the right half. **Turbinates** are ridges in the nasal passage.

Throat Structures

Air flows past soft, flexible structures where the mouth meets the throat: the **soft palate, uvula, tonsils, and back of the tongue**. Throat muscles hold these structures in place. While you sleep, the throat muscles relax a bit. But they normally stay tight enough to keep the airway open.





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What Are CPAP and Other Air Pressure Treatments?

Continuous positive air pressure (CPAP) uses gentle air pressure to hold the airway open. CPAP is often the most effective treatment for sleep apnea and severe snoring. It works very well for many people. But keep in mind that it can take several adjustments before the setup is right for you.

How CPAP Works

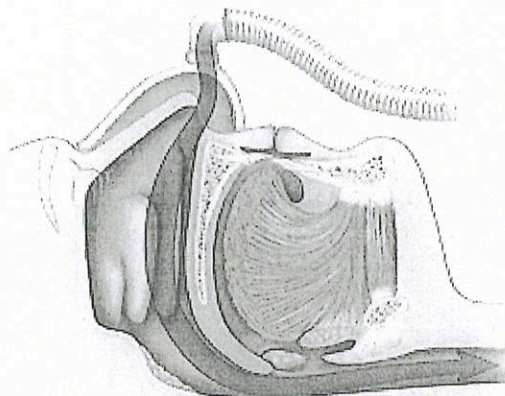
A small portable pump beside the bed sends air through a hose, which is held over your nose by a mask. Air is gently pushed through your airway. The air pressure nudges sagging tissues aside. This widens the airway so you can breathe better. CPAP may be combined with other kinds of therapy for sleep apnea.



Types of Air Pressure Treatments

There are different types of CPAP. Your doctor or CPAP technician will help you decide which type is best for you:

- **Basic CPAP** keeps the pressure constant all night long.
- **A bilevel device** gives out more pressure when you breathe in and less when you breathe out.
- **An autoCPAP device** automatically adjusts pressure throughout the night and in response to changes such as body position, sleep stage, and snoring.



A mask over the nose gently directs air into the throat to keep the airway open.

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Tips to Help Prevent Snoring

Your snoring may get better if you make a few simple changes in your sleeping and waking habits. These changes might be all you need to improve or even cure your snoring, or they may work best when used along with other types of treatment.

Sleep on Your Side

Sleeping on your side may keep throat tissue from blocking your air passage. This may improve or even cure snoring. But it can be hard to stop sleeping on your back. Try sewing a pocket or sock onto the back of a T-shirt or pajama top. Put a few tennis balls or a bag of unshelled nuts into this pocket or sock, then wear the shirt to bed. This will help keep you from rolling onto your back. If this doesn't work, try wearing a backpack full of foam pieces, or put a wedge-shaped pillow behind you.



Avoid Alcohol and Certain Medications

Alcohol and medications such as sedatives, sleeping pills, and antihistamines make breathing slower and more shallow. They also make your muscles relax, so structures in your throat can block your air passage. These changes can cause or worsen snoring. If you snore, avoid alcohol. Talk to your doctor if you take medications to help you sleep.

Lose Weight

Too much weight can make snoring worse. Extra weight puts pressure on your neck tissues and lungs, making breathing harder. If you're overweight, ask your doctor about a weight-loss program.

Exercise Regularly

Exercise can help you lose weight, tone your muscles, and make your lungs work better. These changes may help improve your snoring. Ask your doctor about an exercise program like walking, or something else that you enjoy.

Unblock Your Nose

If something blocks your nose, treating the problem may help improve snoring. Your doctor can suggest medications for allergies or sinus problems. Nasal strips applied on the bridge of the nose can aid breathing. Surgery can straighten a deviated septum, reduce the size of the turbinates, or remove polyps (growths). If you smoke, try to quit because smoking makes a stuffy nose worse.

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