

Losing Sleep Over Snoring

By Dennis Lythgoe (©1998 Deseret News)

My incessant, obnoxious snoring habit is finally a thing of the past.

Like millions of other men, I've never really been bothered by snoring, but my wife has lost innumerable hours of sleep.

She's not alone. According to medical researchers, 50 percent of men and 30 percent of women snore. One recent survey reports that 71 percent of households have a snorer.

Physicians say most people snore because an upper airway obstruction occurs when the muscles of the palate, the uvula and sometimes the tonsils relax during deep sleep and act as vibrating noisemakers. Others snore because of long, floppy palates or uvulas, or too much tissue at the back of the throat.

Because more men than women snore, women continually search for cures.

Actually, most snoring remedies just keep snorers awake.

I can vouch for that, because I've tried most of them.

When I asked my dentist for advice, he took a mold of my teeth and fit

me with a huge contraption designed to keep me breathing through my mouth. This monstrosity looked like a large rock containing imprints of my teeth.

With the unwieldy contraption in my mouth, I could no longer speak. I woke up several times gagging and struggling for breath.

Just as I was thinking about comfy little earplugs for my wife, I heard about a new laser surgical procedure.

The patient is given a local anesthetic. Fully conscious, he sits upright in a comfortable chair while the physician administers a 10-minute laser treatment to trim the uvula. Medical figures seemed encouraging - 85 percent reported a complete cure.

The cost? About \$1,200 and no guarantee of insurance coverage. A surgeon friend was optimistic that it

would help me, but he graciously warned me about side effects - Tylenol would not tame the raging sore throat afterward, I could lose the ability to speak French or play a trumpet, and my voice might climb to a higher register.

Just when my spirit was broken, I learned that an old college friend, Barry Packer, now a dentist, prescribes a small appliance that clicks onto the teeth.

Packer showed me the "Silent Nite," a comparative small device with tiny connectors attached to transparent, flexible upper and lower forms.

"But more important - my marriage is saved!"

The forms are custom laminated with heat and pressure to the dentist's model of the mouth. The device discourages snoring by moving the lower jaw into a forward position, causing the space in the airway to increase and the air velocity and soft tissue vibration to decrease.

It looked much smaller and less intrusive than the last appliance I had in my mouth. It looked sort of like a retainer. Packer, who uses one himself every night, says it stops his snoring at least 80 percent of the time.

I decided to try it. When I put it in my mouth, it felt tolerable, and I could even talk, in muffled tones. At home, I went right to sleep, even though I woke up three or four times clutching my mouth.

After some minor adjustment, I actually slept through the night, and my wife reported in the morning that she had not heard me make even a single snort. My snoring is gone, and \$250 is a lot better than \$1,200. But more important - my marriage is saved!



Relaxed and collapsed airway produces soft tissue vibrations during breathing, which results in snoring.



The Silent Nite device prevents snoring by opening the airway and making breathing easier.

