



Treating Sleep Apnea Without Medication

(NAPSA)—Surprising as it may sound, excessive daytime tiredness may be linked to a person's anatomy.

That's the word from experts who say that sleep apnea—a serious disorder that occurs when a person's breathing is repeatedly interrupted during sleep—can be a matter of not having enough space in the throat for the air to go down to the lungs.

As a consequence, your brain wakes you constantly throughout the night to breathe. That means you are enjoying only very light, fragmented and poor-quality sleep, leaving you still tired at the end of your night's rest.

Many Cases Go Undiagnosed

Sleep apnea afflicts more Americans than asthma or diabetes and yet more than 75 percent remain undiagnosed.

This can present additional problems, since those with the condition tend to have high blood pressure, heart problems, stroke, depression and sexual dysfunction—and annual health care costs that are twice the average, according to the American Sleep Apnea Association.

A Successful Approach

Fortunately, the condition is treatable. However, as with other matters of anatomy, medication is not the answer. That's because the space of the throat must be adjusted in order to take care of the problem.

One approach that has found success uses a dental device. Called an orthotic, it is similar in appearance to a sports mouth guard. "It moves the lower jaw forward and down slightly into an anatomically correct



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resting position," which keeps the airway open," says Dr. Mark Duncan of the Las Vegas Institute for Advanced Dental Studies.

Numerous Benefits

An orthotic offers several benefits without surgery, including:

- Significant reduction in apneas for patients with mild to moderate apnea, particularly if patients sleep either on their backs or stomachs.
- Improvement and reduction in the frequency of snoring and loudness of snoring in most patients.

Training Is Important

It's essential to properly measure and find the optimal, at-rest, natural jaw position in order to build an effective orthotic. Choosing a specially trained neuromuscular dentist who has both the training and computerized equipment is also critical. For example, the neuromuscular dentists from LVI are specially trained to fit this device.

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