

# Sleep On It

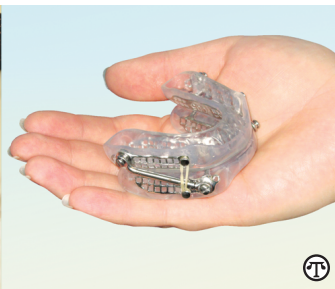
## Say Ahhh To Get More Zzzz's Dentists Help Patients Say "Good Night" To Sleep Issues

(NAPSA)—Healthy teeth, healthy gums and now...healthy sleep? For those who have never consulted a dentist about treatments for sleep apnea and snoring, it may be time to make an appointment. Dental sleep medicine is a growing segment of dentistry that focuses on managing snoring and sleep apnea with oral appliance therapy—an effective alternative to the standard treatment of the disease, the continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machine and mask. Oral appliance therapy uses a “mouth guard-like” device, worn only during sleep, to maintain an open, unobstructed airway.

“Oral appliances are very effective in treating sleep apnea because they help open the airway for patients,” said B. Gail Demko, D.M.D., president of the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine (AADSM). “Depending on the patient’s needs, the device will either hold the tongue in place or support the jaw in a forward position to keep the patient’s airway open and provide more refreshing sleep.”

### The Dangers of Sleep Apnea

According to the AADSM, at least 12 to 18 million adults in the U.S. have obstructive sleep apnea, which causes them to stop breathing hundreds of times a night for anywhere from a few seconds to more than a minute. Sleep apnea is a potentially life-threatening condition that can increase the risk for serious health problems, from congestive heart failure, stroke, high blood



**Oral appliances are an effective alternative to the standard CPAP treatment for sleep apnea and snoring.**

pressure and heart disease to diabetes, obesity, depression and impotence if left untreated.

### Traditional Treatments

CPAP is the traditionally recommended treatment for sleep apnea. Sleeping with a CPAP machine, which includes a face mask, tubing and a constantly running motor, however, can be difficult to adjust to. According to the AADSM, up to 50 percent of sleep apnea patients do not comply with or tolerate CPAP.

### Alternative Solutions From a Dentist

Dentists pioneered the use of oral appliance therapy for the treatment of sleep apnea and snoring. For many, oral appliance devices are more comfortable to wear than a CPAP mask. The devices are also quiet, portable and easy to care for. Research suggests that oral appliance therapy can often equal CPAP in effectiveness and offers a higher patient compliance rate.

“Dentists trained in dental sleep medicine work in conjunction with a sleep physician and recommend a specific oral appliance based on a patient’s needs,” said Dr. Demko. “The important thing for patients to remember is that effective oral devices are always custom fit by a dentist and may need adjustments over time to ensure maximum effectiveness.”

Oral appliance therapy is recommended for people with mild to moderate obstructive sleep apnea. Once a patient is diagnosed with primary snoring or obstructive sleep apnea by a board-certified sleep physician, a dentist trained in dental sleep medicine can provide treatment with oral appliance therapy. There are more than 80 different styles of oral appliances that have received FDA clearance and the treatment is often covered by medical insurance.

To find a local dentist who offers oral appliance therapy, visit [www.LocalSleepDentist.com](http://www.LocalSleepDentist.com).