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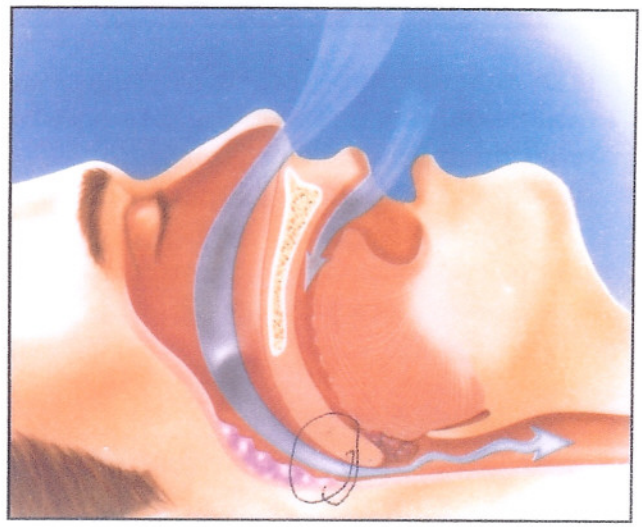
Snoring

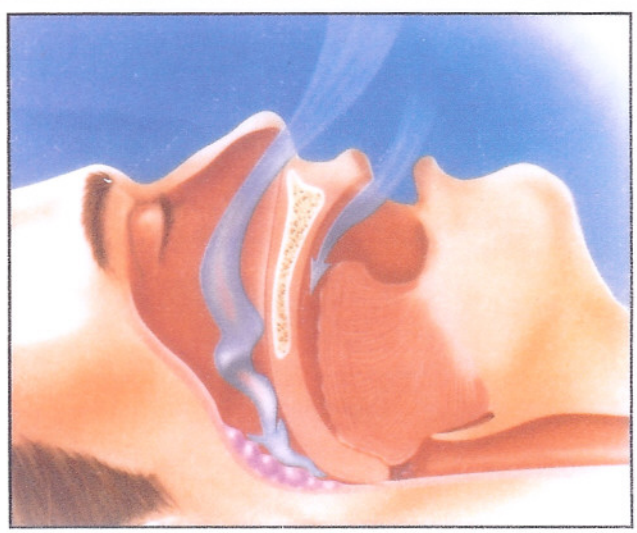
If your throat structures are too large or the muscles relax too much during sleep, the air passage may be partially blocked. As air from the nose or mouth passes around this blockage, the throat structures vibrate and rattle against each other, causing the familiar sound of snoring. At times, this sound can be so loud that snorers wake up others, or even themselves, during the night. Snoring gets worse as more and more of the air passage is blocked.



During snoring, air flow is partially blocked.

Sleep Apnea

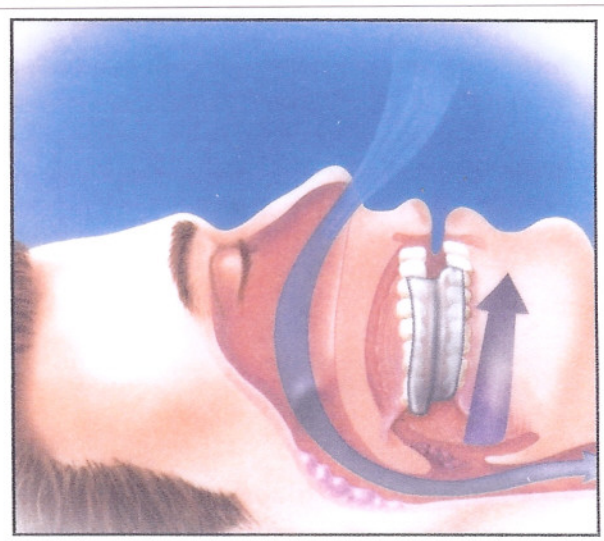
If the structures completely block the throat, air can't flow to the lungs at all. This is called **apnea** (meaning "no breathing"). Since the lungs aren't getting fresh air, the brain tells the body to wake up just enough to tighten the muscles and unblock the air passage. With a loud gasp, breathing begins again. This process may be repeated over and over again throughout the night, making your sleep fragmented and light. Even though you don't remember waking up so many times during the night, you feel tired all day. The lack of sleep and fresh air can also strain your lungs, heart, and other organs, leading to problems such as high blood pressure, heart attack, or stroke.



During sleep apnea, air flow is completely blocked.

How Oral Devices Work

Oral devices work in different ways. Some hold the tongue forward to keep it from blocking the throat. Some hold the whole jaw slightly forward, moving the throat structures with it to keep the air passage open. Others lift the uvula and soft palate, keeping them from blocking the throat. One or more of these devices may be tested on a trial basis before the final design is determined and fitting is done. After the device is fitted, periodic follow-up visits, possibly including a repeat sleep study, ensure that the device fits correctly, your jaw and teeth remain healthy, and sleep apnea hasn't developed or become worse.



With oral devices, throat structures move out of your air passage, allowing air to flow freely through your throat.