

Obstructive Sleep Apnea and Oral Appliance Therapy

Obstructive Sleep Apnea

Obstructive sleep apnea occurs when your muscles relax during sleep, allowing the soft tissue to collapse and block the airway. As a result, sleep apnea causes you to stop breathing up to hundreds of times a night for anywhere from a few seconds to more than a minute. Snoring, excessive daytime sleepiness, memory problems, irritability, fatigue and insomnia are all signs that you could be losing shut-eye to sleep apnea. If left untreated, sleep apnea can be a potentially life threatening condition. It can increase the risk for other serious health problems such as high blood pressure, stroke, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, depression and impotence.

The traditionally prescribed treatment for obstructive sleep apnea is continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) therapy. It involves sleeping with a face mask connected by tubing to a constantly running machine. Although CPAP is effective, up to half of patients don't adhere to the treatment. Dentists can provide an alternate sleep solution with oral appliance therapy.

Oral Appliance Therapy

Oral appliance therapy is an effective, non-invasive treatment option for snoring and obstructive sleep apnea that fits easily into your lifestyle. A dental oral appliance looks like a sports mouth guard and is worn only during sleep. It supports the jaw in a forward position to help maintain an open upper airway, preventing sleep apnea and snoring.

Once you have been diagnosed with obstructive sleep apnea by a sleep physician, a dentist experienced in dental sleep medicine can make a custom-fitted oral appliance using impressions and models of your teeth. Oral appliance therapy is covered by many medical insurance plans. Patients like it because it's comfortable, easy to wear, quiet, portable, convenient for travel and easy to clean.

Treating snoring or sleep apnea with oral appliance therapy can help you feel like a new person. You will find that your symptoms, and your quality of life, can improve dramatically when you remain committed to your treatment and use it nightly. Custom-fit oral appliances from Mercedes R. Del Valle can improve your sleep, restore your alertness and revitalize your health.

If you have concerns about snoring and sleep apnea, it may be time to make an appointment. If you suspect you may have sleep apnea, I can recommend a sleep physician to help get you started on your path to treatment. If you have already been diagnosed with sleep apnea, I can fit you with an oral appliance. Our team at Mercedes R. Del Valle is ready to answer your questions about obstructive sleep apnea, dental sleep medicine and oral appliance therapy.