

A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP



A NEW HOME-BASED SLEEP STUDY AIMS TO HELP APNEA SUFFERERS.

BY DON ALLEN

Snoring, especially the loud obnoxious kind, has been played for laughs more often than not. In reality, it's not a laughing matter and if you think it's humorous, just ask the person who sleeps with you.

Snoring results from the intake of oxygen that vibrates off the soft tissue at the back of the throat and is sometimes a warning sign of sleep apnea. That disorder is characterized by pauses in breathing during sleep, and each episode, called an apnea, is lengthy enough that one or more breaths are missed. Clinically significant levels are defined as five or more episodes per hour. In other words, the effects of sleep apnea will make for a lousy night's rest.

"When patients tell me they're not sleeping well, there are usually a couple of possibilities," says Dr. Tony Soileau D.D.S. "It may be snoring or it may be sleep apnea, but the important thing is, they just can't sleep." Dr. Soileau has been practicing dentistry for 15 years and dealing with patients' sleep problems for 10 years and says perhaps half of his clients come to him because of poor sleeping habits.

More and more people who don't sleep soundly are ending up in a doctor's or dentist's office because the condition doesn't improve without help. The person with sleep apnea doesn't even know he or she has trouble breathing, even upon awakening. The symptoms can be around for decades, and the sufferer has no clue as to why he's sleepy during the day, needs naps more often than not, and is always tired. The condition becomes such a way of life that the sufferer thinks it's normal.

Most physicians will suggest CPAP or an alternative solution involving a home test and sometimes, if necessary, surgery. A typical CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machine houses the air pump in a case lined with sound-absorbing material, and a hose that carries the pressurized air to a face mask or nasal pillow. While the machine is considered effective in many cases, a growing number of users find it uncomfortable.

"From what I hear, 70-80 percent of them just hate it," says Soileau. "I had one patient who used

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*Louisiana's 1st Home Sleep
Testing Company*

Is Your Snoring A Problem?



DID YOU KNOW:

- Snoring is the #1 indication that you may have sleep apnea?
- Over 20 Million Americans are affected with Sleep Apnea, 90% of which go undiagnosed and untreated?
- It is estimated that Obstructive Sleep Apnea may be responsible for 38,000 cardiovascular deaths in the U.S. alone?



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the CPAP, didn't like it at all, and she asked me to design a mouthpiece for her that worked. I've had a lot of patients come to me since then."

Many physicians will send a patient to a sleep center, where extensive testing will provide the most complete data possible. But an alternative testing procedure — home testing — is gaining popularity among the general public. "There no question I'll get more data from a sleep center," says Soileau. "But there's a problem. Many of the patients I see are having trouble sleeping and don't know why. At a sleep center, they're hooked up to a machine, filmed, have attendants checking on them, and don't always give a good response when I ask them, 'How'd you sleep?' I'd rather they got the best sleep they could in the comfort of their home sleeping next to their partner, and it's a big reason I like the home testing method."

Home Sleep Delivered is a Lafayette company that began operation at the beginning of the year. "We're all about the testing," says General Manager Ryan Sullivan. "Our job is to acquire information for the physician by going to the patient's home, getting

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them as comfortable as possible, conducting the test and relaying the information to the physician."

Sullivan says Home Sleep Delivered needs a night to get a proper reading, and the company will FedEx the equipment and accompanying instructional video to out-of-town patients. According to Sullivan, the equipment consists of an air-flow sensor, which monitors oxygen through the nasal cavity; a belt worn around the chest, which measures respiratory effort; and a pulse ox meter, which measures both oxygen saturation in the blood as well as the patient's pulse. The readings are also able to indicate which sleeping position — back, stomach, and side — provides better or worse results. If the patient is out-of-town, a pre-paid FedEx envelope is included, and the data will be downloaded and interpreted by one of the company's physicians and then returned to either the patient or ordering physician.

"About 70 percent of our business now comes from physician referrals," says Casey Hoyt, an owner of Home Sleep Delivered. "It's still a very new technology, and no one's really doing this for patients. It costs \$350 per night to use (one of our units), which compares to about \$2,000 for a lab study."

The overwhelming majority of sleep apnea conditions are considered obstructive, where breathing is interrupted by a physical blockage of airflow despite all respiratory effort. As of now, there are three solutions; CPAP, an oral appliance or surgery. The bad news is that sleep apnea doesn't usually go away on its own. The good news is that it can be controlled, and the sooner a sufferer gets help, the more soundly he or she will sleep.

So will the partner.

Your sleep problems may be cause for alarm.

Insomnia, snoring and other sleep disorders can sometimes be more than a nuisance - in fact, they may be symptoms of a serious medical problem. That's why we urge you to call Our Lady of Lourdes Center for Sleep Disorders for help with your sleep problems. Ours was the first sleep center in Lafayette accredited by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. Accredited sleep centers offer many advantages that "sleep labs" don't, including:

- a diplomate of the ABSM on staff who reviews all sleep studies at the facility
- staff is required to continually update their knowledge of sleep medicine through Continuing Medical Education

For more information, call Lafayette's accredited sleep center at (337) 289-5606 and let us put your sleep problems to rest.



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