

Hill Country

Ear, Nose, and Throat, P.A.

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Fitting of A Custom Oral Appliance

Many advancements have been made in techniques that reduce or eliminate sleep apnea and snoring. One of these techniques is by using an oral appliance. This may improve nighttime breathing as well as diminish or eliminate sleep apnea and snoring. These techniques may be combined with other treatments such as nasal procedure, tongue reduction procedure, CPAP, etc. to treat apnea most effectively.

What causes snoring and apnea?

When you are asleep, muscles and soft tissues relax. When the bulky soft tissues and muscles of the tongue relax during sleep they may fall to the back of the throat causing airway obstruction. The tongue and throat tissues may vibrate on each other as air passes over them. This vibration creates the snoring noises. Episodes of upper airway obstruction cause obstructive sleep apnea.

How does the oral appliance work?

An advanced technology that displaces the tongue forward is the use of an oral appliance at night. The tongue muscles are attached to the inside of the lower jaw. The oral appliance works by displacing the lower jaw somewhat forward relative to the upper jaw. This brings the tongue off the back of the throat opening up the airway. This may be used as a treatment for sleep apnea in some patients.

Could there be persistent snoring or apnea?

Most people that use the oral appliance will have improved breathing with reduced snoring and reduced apnea. The appliance can be adjusted to advance the lower jaw more, pulling the tongue further forward and opening the airway more. Because snoring and apnea can be caused by vibration of other structures in the throat (the palate,



the sidewall of the throat, the tonsils, etc.) or nasal obstruction, some patients that have apnea may continue to need to use CPAP or have other treatments to improve the upper airway.

Day of fitting

The fitting will take about 20-30 minutes. Any dentures or removable implants will need to be removed prior to the fitting. The top tray will be fitted to the upper tray first, then the lower tray will be fitted next with the lower jaw advanced about 30 % of maximum protrusion. The appliance should feel comfortable in the mouth. If not, it can be refitted.

After the fitting

- ❖ Use the appliance nightly as instructed by Dr. Lano
- ❖ Expect some increased saliva production for the first week or two
- ❖ Your jaw may be sore for the first few weeks
- ❖ Massage the jaw joints in the morning for a few minutes
- ❖ Take some ibuprofen if your jaw is sore
- ❖ Clean the appliance daily with toothbrush and water
- ❖ The appliance may last several years with good care

Risks of oral appliance treatment:

Burn injury to the gums during the fitting, TMJ symptoms, difficulty with bite, movement of teeth, dry mouth, increased salivation, need for other procedures to achieve desired goal.

If you have any further questions call your office at 830-629-5830.