- Snore



Can you ever STOP SNORING?

It's a habit that can bring embarrassment and teasing, but taming those rumbles could be simpler than you think

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Snoring is often treated as a bit of a joke. But for the 15 million people in the UK who snuffle and snort in their sleep, it's no laughing matter. While some may shrug off the teasing, many habitual snorers find the condition frustrating and embarrassing, and it may even hold you back from having fun weekends away with friends or progressing in a new relationship – the fear of wheezing during your first sexy sleepover is real! But snoring shouldn't control your life. Here's everything you need to know.

The causes

There are many reasons why people snore, from medical conditions – like obstructive sleep apnoea, thyroid issues and conditions affecting the nose or throat (polyps, congestion, enlarged tonsils or adenoids, or a deviated septum) – to lifestyle factors. 'Increased body weight, drinking alcohol and smoking can make snoring worse,' says Dr Aarthi Sinha from churchcrescent.co.uk.

The noise you make is the sound of air moving through a narrower airway at night, causing tissues to vibrate in the nose and back of the mouth. This can worsen as you get older. 'As we age, the soft palate tissue becomes longer and looser, vibrating more with the airflow linked to our breathing,' explains ENT surgeon Professor Yves Kamami. In some cases, this can cause issues with breathing during sleep – known as sleep apnoea.

Suffering in silence

Snoring isn't just a 'man's problem', 4.5 million women suffer from it too. However, this masculine association has created a stigma around it, leading to embarrassment and under-reporting among women.

Health warning

Whether you sound like a whistling kettle or someone sawing logs with a chainsaw, snoring can be detrimental to your health and also a clear indicator that not everything is running as it should. 'Snoring can affect the quality of your sleep, and in extreme cases (like sleep apnoea), the amount of oxygen going to your brain,' says Dr Sinha. While snoring itself isn't inherently a sign of ill health, it can indicate an underlying condition, so it's important you speak to your doctor.

Diagnosing the problem

Snoring is usually reported by people's partners or family members who get disturbed by it. It's the most annoying sleep habit in a partner or friend, says a study by bed company Dusk, where 67% of respondents complained about loud snorers. But what if you sleep alone?

There are signs and symptoms that may indicate you're a snorer. 'If you feel unrefreshed when you wake, are tired through the day or suffer from headaches, you may be having significant snoring or breathing problems while asleep,' says Dr Sinha. Waking up with a dry or sore throat, struggling to concentrate or having mood swings can also be warning signs. 'Speak to your doctor, as there are tests to see if snoring is affecting your health.'

GIVE IT A GO

Try these products to help silence the snorting.

✢ Xlear Nasal Spray, £11.59 for 45ml, amazon.co.uk
Saline spray that helps reduce nasal swelling.



✢ Snoreeze Snoring Relief Oral Device, £37, Boots
Adjustable mouthpiece that holds your jaw forward as you sleep, opening your airway and helping you breathe quietly and easily.



✢ Silentnight Anti-Snore Pillows (pack of two), £28.99, wayfair.co.uk
Designed to support your head and neck, keeping it in the right position to improve your breathing.



WANT A PEACEFUL SLEEP AT LAST?

Try these top tips to stop snoring, for good.

✢ Keep a healthy weight
If you have excess fat around your neck, it pushes against your airways, narrowing them, so it's difficult to breathe silently. Make sure you are moving regularly to maintain a healthy BMI (body mass index) – the NHS recommends 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week. To check your BMI, use the calculator tool at nhs.uk.

✢ Quit smoking
Cigarette smoke irritates and damages the lining of the nasal cavity and throat, causing swelling and reducing the elasticity of airway tissue. This makes them more prone to collapsing during sleep, causing the throat to vibrate and potentially restricting breathing. Smokers are also more susceptible to colds, which can exacerbate symptoms. For help quitting, download the free NHS Quit Smoking app, available at the App Store or Google Play.

✢ Reduce alcohol intake
A glass of merlot before bed might not be the wisest idea. Alcohol relaxes muscles, including those in your throat, making your airway more likely to close and vibrate.

✢ Change your position
Sleeping on your side, rather than on your back, could ease your snorts and snuffles. It helps keep your airway open, in turn preventing your tongue and the soft tissues in your mouth and throat from collapsing and obstructing airflow.

✢ Medical procedures
Suffering from enlarged adenoids and tonsils? These might need to be taken out to help improve symptoms. Removing excess tissue around the palate and throat to reduce vibration in the throat tissues, using surgery or radiofrequency ablation, can sometimes help ease snoring in some patients too.

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