Don’t snooze on sleep habits they are key to well-being

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SLEEP is vital for our health, yet millions worldwide grapple with obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), marked by repeated pauses in breathing during sleep.



While continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) therapy is the gold standard for treating OSA, oral appliance therapy offers a noninvasive option for those who find CPAP cumbersome or intolerable.

Before delving into oral appliance therapy, it is essential to understand the basics of OSA. This occurs when throat muscles relax excessively during sleep, narrowing or collapsing the airway, leading to airflow reduction (hypopnea) or cessation (apnea), and fragmented sleep.

Poor sleep quality leads to daytime fatigue and significantly increases the risk of motor vehicle crashes or occupational hazards that can be fatal. Left untreated, OSA can cause severe health issues like hypertension, heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Oral appliance therapy includes several types, such as mandibular advancement devices, tongue stabilising devices, palatal lift appliances and combination devices.

The most popular type is mandibular advancement devices which position the mandible and tongue forward to keep the airway open.

Mandibular advancement devices are discreet, comfortable and easy to use. Unlike bulky CPAP machines which require a power source, oral appliances are small, portable and do not need a power source, making them ideal for travel. This convenience allows individuals to maintain their OSA treatment regimen even when away from home, ensuring consistent therapy and better management of symptoms.

Thus, compliance with mandibular advancement devices is significantly superior compared to CPAP, making its overall clinical effectiveness comparable with CPAP.

Additionally, oral appliance therapy is a noninvasive treatment option that does not involve surgery or the use of medications. As such, it carries minimal risk of complications and side effects, making it a safe and effective alternative for many individuals with OSA.

Mandibular advancement devices can be customised to suit each patient’s specific needs and preferences. Orthodontists can carefully design and adjust the devices to ensure optimal fit and effectiveness, maximising treatment outcomes and patient comfort. This comfort factor encourages regular use and long-term adherence to treatment.

However, individuals with poor dental status, inadequate healthy teeth, active gum disease and limited jaw motion range are not suitable candidates for mandibular advancement devices.
Overall, oral appliance therapy can play a crucial role in managing OSA, offering a comfortable, convenient and effective alternative to CPAP therapy for many individuals.
By keeping the airway open during sleep, oral appliances reduce breathing disturbances and improve sleep quality.
For individuals with mild to moderate OSA or those who cannot tolerate CPAP therapy, oral appliance therapy can provide a valuable treatment option that promotes adherence, comfort and convenience, significantly enhancing their quality of life and allowing them to enjoy restful and rejuvenating sleep night after night.
As the world comes together to celebrate World Sleep Day on March 14, let us take this opportunity to recognise the vital role that quality sleep plays in our overall health and well-being.
Prioritising good sleep habits is not just a luxury but a necessity for a healthier and more productive life.
Let us start making better choices today because our health does not pause when we sleep.
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