ORAL APPLIANCE THERAPY FOR OBSTRUCTIVE SLEEP APNEA

ℹ️ *Quick Facts:*

An oral appliance (or dental appliance) is ordered by your doctor and fit by a trained dentist. It offers another therapy option for treating obstructive sleep apnea.

KEY POINTS:

- **An oral appliance keeps the lower jaw from falling back during sleep which helps maintain an open airway.**

- **Oral appliance therapy is most useful for mild and moderate obstructive sleep apnea. It also is an option for severe sleep apnea when attempts to use positive airway pressure (PAP) therapy have failed.**

- **There are many different types of oral appliances used to treat sleep apnea. Most people, even those who wear dentures, will typically be able to be fit with a custom made appliance.**

- **Oral appliance therapy is almost always covered by Medicare and medical insurance plans.**

- **After being fit with an oral appliance you may need to have another sleep study to make sure that it is treating your sleep apnea properly.**

❓ *How Can I Learn More?*

- Talk to your board-certified sleep medicine physician.
- Visit **www.sleepeducation.org**

⚠️ *Am I At Risk:*

Positive airway pressure (PAP) therapy is nearly always effective, but some people have a hard time getting used to it. Oral appliances tend to be easy to tolerate, but may not be as effective as PAP. Some people who use PAP therapy also have an oral appliance for when they travel. Sometimes an oral appliance is used together with PAP. This combination therapy reduces the pressure of the PAP machine needed to keep the airway open.

GENERAL OVERVIEW:

Oral appliances for sleep apnea have been prescribed by physicians and fit by dentists for over 30 years. While there are many different types of oral appliances, they all function in the same basic way. Oral appliances anchor the lower jaw to the upper jaw. This anchoring helps keep the airway open by holding the lower jaw from falling back, or by bringing the lower jaw forward. Your dentist will find the best position of the appliance to reduce snoring, treat sleep apnea, and help you feel more rested.

Oral appliances for sleep apnea also may protect the teeth from grinding and clenching (also known as bruxism).

Minor side effects are common with oral appliance therapy. These include movement of the teeth or changes in how the teeth fit together. These side effects can be avoided by following up with your dentist.

You and your physician may decide that an oral appliance is right for you.
Here are some things to consider to increase your chances of success:

- Avoid "internet and TV" oral appliances that are self-fit or "boil and bite." These types of appliances are less effective. Without medical and dental expertise, they also may cause significant, painful, and expensive side effects.
- Work with a dentist who has experience with oral appliance therapy for sleep apnea. Ask your sleep physician to refer you to a qualified dentist.
- Your dentist will customize your oral appliance using digital or physical impressions and models of your teeth.

- People who have had or are currently dealing with temporomandibular disorders (TMD) may be able to use an oral appliance.
- For some patients, treating sleep apnea reduces clenching and grinding of the teeth, which may be contributing to their jaw problem.
- Oral appliance therapy is a lifelong therapy for most people. Long-term follow up with your dentist and sleep physician is critical to maximize success and minimize negative side effects.

➔ Next Steps:

- Work with a qualified dentist and sleep medicine specialist to maximize your chance of success. This collaborative care also will minimize the likelihood of significant side effects with an oral appliance. Consistent professional follow-up with your dentist and sleep physician can provide years of successful oral appliance therapy.

⊕ Questions For Your Physician

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

Sample Questions:

Why do I feel tired all the time?

What is a Oral Appliance and how can it help me?

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