

THIEF IN THE NIGHT

July, 2010, Sedona, AZ---Snoring has long been considered a noisy inconvenience or something to laugh about. It is now seen as a thief in the night stealing health.

Sedona dentist, William P. Smith, Jr., D.D.S., recently returned from the 19th Annual meeting of the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine in San Antonio, Texas. Thirty speakers presented scientific programs featuring the current research and news in dental sleep medicine from 7 countries.

Allan I. Pack, PhD, MBChB, presented new findings about snoring. He is the Chief of the Division of Sleep Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania.

Until this meeting, the medical community viewed snoring as a problem for the bed partner, not a problem for the snorer. Now it is seen as a thief stealing the snorer's health.

Dr. Pack's research showed that snoring vibrations could cause inflammation of the lining of the walls of the carotid neck arteries. This inflammation attracts plaque to form on the walls. This is a very dangerous condition. The plaque can break away without warning, lodge in the brain, and cause a stroke. Snoring is now seen as a risk factor for stroke.

Dr. Pack also described other findings about vibrations from snoring. It damages the nerves in the throat and in the base of the brain. The damaged throat nerves are less able to stimulate the throat muscles to keep the airway open. This leads to an increased risk of obstructive sleep apnea. Sleep apnea can cause drops in oxygen blood levels, and many serious medical conditions.

Snoring also results in a light level of sleep for the snorer. While the person may have a long sleep, it can be a light, non-refreshing sleep. The person then feels tired all day with a reduced job performance.

So "simple snoring" is not as simple or harmless as once believed. It can cause significant health problems for the snorer, as well as sleep problems for the bed partner.

Children with snoring can have behavior problems similar to any child who is tired and cranky. The difference is that the snoring child is always tired. Sometimes this can be misdiagnosed as attention deficit disorder. Studies have shown that when the snoring is eliminated, medication for ADD is no longer needed.

Adults with snoring generally feel better after getting a refreshing non-snoring sleep.

Dr. Pack recommends immediate treatment for anyone who snores. It should be treated at its first sign. This includes people of all ages.

Treatment options vary depending on the cause of the snoring. Only an examination can help direct the treatment in the right direction. Oftentimes treatment is as simple as wearing a professionally constructed oral appliance. These appliances have been shown to be 90% effective in reducing snoring to a safe level. Less often, removal of tonsils, adenoids, or enlarging the nose airway is helpful.

Dr. William P. Smith, Jr.'s practice is focused on the treatment of snoring, sleep apnea, and TMD. He is an Arizona licensed general dentist and can be reached at 928-282-2077 or SleepBetterDoc.com.

The American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine is the only professional association that represents dental and medical practitioners treating sleep disordered breathing through the use of oral appliance therapy and oral surgery. The Annual Meeting is the single largest world wide gathering of dental professionals involved in the treatment of sleep disordered breathing.