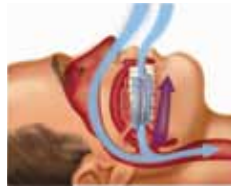


Oral Appliance Therapy

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Courtesy of Dental Services Group

An oral appliance is a small acrylic device that fits over the upper and lower teeth or tongue (similar to an orthodontic retainer or mouth guard). This device slightly advances the lower jaw or tongue, moving the base of the tongue forward and opening the airway. This improves breathing and reduces snoring and apnea. The appliance is fabricated and customized for each patient by a dentist with advanced training in the treatment of snoring and sleep apnea. The appliances are comfortable and well tolerated by the patients. They are easy to place and remove, easy to clean and are convenient for travel.

Indications for Oral Appliance Therapy

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine has stated that an oral appliance is indicated as a first treatment of choice for patients with primary snoring, mild obstructive sleep apnea or patients with moderate OSA who prefer the appliance to CPAP and as a second treatment option for patients with severe sleep apnea who cannot tolerate CPAP.

Therefore, oral appliance therapy is indicated for:

- Primary/heavy snoring
- Mild or moderate sleep apnea and certain cases of severe OSA
- Poor tolerance of nasal CPAP
- Failure of surgery
- Use during travel
- In combination with nasal CPAP

Possible Side Effects of Oral Appliance Therapy

There are a number of temporary side effects that may be noticeable during the first few weeks or may require minor adjustment of the appliance by the dentist. These include:

- Tension in the jaw
- Sore teeth or gums
- Excessive salivation or a dry mouth
- Temporary change in the bite (when appliance is removed in the morning)
- Noises in the jaw joint (TMJ)

The potential side effects that can be more problematic include:

- Jaw muscle or joint pain
- Permanent changes in the bite
- Slight movement of teeth
- Loosening of dental restorations (crowns, bridges, etc.)

From the research evidence and our clinical experience, jaw muscle and joint pain occur in approximately 10% of the patients and the pain will disappear when the patient discontinues use of the appliance. Soreness or pain is not an issue for 90% of the patients. Changes in the bite can occur for about 30 – 40% of the patients. Although the changes may be slight it may still be difficult for the patient to close their back teeth together, which may have an effect on their ability to chew effectively. The slight movement of teeth and loosening of dental restorations occurs very infrequently (1% of the patients) but is still worth noting.