



A Good Night's Sleep

Today's consumers are always searching for a newer, better way to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

*Editor's Note: This is the first installment of an exploration of **dentistry's impact on overall health**. In the next publication you receive, we will explore 3D imaging's impact on sleep apnea.*



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It's everywhere you turn, with new trends popping up regularly – from kale smoothies to CrossFit to paleo diets. For every newfound way to achieve optimal health, there's an old tried-and-true method that gets a reboot. As far as the latter is concerned, there are few ways as effective and important to an individual's well-being than a restful night's sleep. It allows the body to rejuvenate and fully prepare for the next day.

Those suffering from sleep apnea miss out on this opportunity.

The National Sleep Foundation reports that more than 18 million American adults are affected by a form of sleep apnea, characterized by repeated periods of interrupted sleep. Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), the most common strain of the disorder, is caused by the soft tissue in the throat collapsing and blocking the airway between the nose and throat. This blockage inhibits normal breathing for a minimum of 10 seconds, and in more serious cases, over a minute, according to the American Association of Dental Sleep Medicine.

Advanced Technology for a Simple Result

This obstruction provokes abnormal snoring patterns followed by explosive breaths, often waking sleepers for brief periods of time. These restless nights decrease blood oxygen levels, and over time, increase an individual's risk for hypertension, heart disease, diabetes and stroke.

It's safe to say that sleep apnea is a significant health issue – and one that dental medicine historically wasn't able to do much about. Those days are gone.

Innovative dental advancements offer those suffering with the disorder an alternative treatment plan to the now-ubiquitous CPAP machines. These include oral appliances – customizable devices designed to fit to an individual's mouth to ensure comfort and functionality when worn overnight.

"The evidence of the connection between oral health and overall health becomes more evident every year," said Nick Abruzzo, Patterson Dental's director of marketing, equipment. "Sleep apnea is the perfect example of a way that dental technology can cross over and have a really positive impact on overall health."

Generally speaking, oral appliances work by shifting the lower jaw forward to prevent the soft tissue in the throat from collapsing, thus increasing the size of the airway to allow for more consistent air flow. And there continue to be new developments in dental technology to address sleep apnea and its health impact.

"Patterson is committed to finding new and improved ways to help our clients improve the lives of their patients," Abruzzo said. "We consider ourselves lucky to be working in the dental industry at a time when changing technology continues to provide new ways to impact the oral health, and overall health, of the communities we serve."

Next time: Sirona 3D imaging units' role in sleep apnea treatment.

ABOUT SLEEP APNEA

Sleep apnea is a chronic condition that requires long-term management. Lifestyle changes, mouthpieces, surgery and breathing devices can successfully treat sleep apnea in many people.

Left untreated, sleep apnea can:

INCREASE the risk of high blood pressure, heart attack, stroke, obesity and diabetes

INCREASE the risk of, or worsen, heart failure

MAKE arrhythmias, or irregular heartbeats, more likely

INCREASE the chance of having work-related or driving accidents

*Source:
National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute*

