



Getting It Straight

by Dr. Kirk Christensen,
Woodstock's Orthodontic Specialist

Q: Is there a link between a person's bite and their snoring?

A: In some cases malocclusion may be a contributing factor, and in others, it may not.

Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) is the cessation of breathing for over 10 seconds and often up to a minute or more several times an hour during sleep. There are usually snoring sounds before and after this event created from the vibration of the palatal tissue due to restricted air moving between the tongue and soft palate. Typically a posteriorly positioned tongue is responsible for this blockage, and "back sleepers" would have more tendency for that to occur. Given that, a person with a Class II jaw relationship (due to a deficient or retro-positioned lower jaw) would likely be more of a candidate for a posteriorly positioned tongue, and airway obstruction. I, in fact, suffer from this problem and am going to attempt to reposition my bite non-surgically with conventional braces and elastics. If this does not resolve the problem, I will likely need lower jaw advancement surgery. It should be noted that people with ideal bites and jaw positions can also suffer from snoring and OSA. Neck size, increased body fat, alcohol consumption before sleep, enlarged tongue, tonsils and adenoids, and sleep position, all factor into this equation. There are custom dental appliances that can be fabricated for posturing the lower jaw and tongue forward at night. These can be helpful in mild to moderate cases. Talk to an orthodontist or dentist that works with these appliances for details. A sleep observation study is definitely advised. OSA is dangerous, contributes to many health problems, and should not be left unchecked. A great website for OSA and snoring information is the American Sleep Apnea Association www.sleepapnea.org/index.html

!Speaking of websites, Woodstock Orthodontics is proud to have launched its website this past weekend. www.woodstockortho.com In addition to information about the orthodontic specialty practice there is a web page dedicated to the "Getting it Straight" articles, in case you have missed or want to review any since the column began in February, 2007.

!Dr. Christensen's column appears weekly in the Northwest Herald. Questions to be answered and treatment inquiries may be directed to: **Woodstock Orthodontics, c/o Kirk H. Christensen, DDS, 226 West Judd Street, Woodstock, IL 60098, Phone: 815-337-5522**