

Silent Night...ZZZZ!

**Doctor-tested
sleep appliance
eliminates snoring**

More than a third of all men snore while sleeping, so it should not have come as much of a surprise to Stephen G. Blank, DDS, to learn that he was among the many window rattlers who snore so loud, they keep their spouses awake at night.

“If you’re going to bed for seven or eight hours of sleep but still feeling tired sometimes, you’re probably not getting the amount of sleep you need,” Dr. Blank informs. “And there were a few times when that had happened to me.

“I suspected that on those occasions when I felt a bit tired, my body was not

Stephen Blank, DDS

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Dr. Blank took it upon himself to find a cure for his snoring.

It did, though, and for one very simple reason:

“I’ve never heard myself snore,” Dr. Blank says with a chuckle. “But my wife has been telling me for years that I snore, and those subtle nudges or that elbow in the ribs that she gives me in the middle of the night are there for a reason. But really, I had no clue.”

Dr. Blank isn’t alone. Most people who snore – and that community includes three out of every ten women – are unaware they snore because snoring typically occurs when the brain is at rest and the sensors that would detect the snoring are in, well, sleep mode.

At the same time, however, other parts of the brain are still active. For example, the part of the brain that controls the heartbeat and regulates breathing continues to function as normal. The position in which we sleep, though, can affect the rhythm of our breathing.

Lying on your back can cause the base of the tongue and soft palate to fall back into the throat, which can prevent the air we breathe from passing freely. When that flow of air is disrupted, the soft tissue vibrates and makes a buzzing sound like sawing wood.

But sleep position is just one of the many potential causes of snoring. Obesity, allergies, the shape of the mouth and throat and certain illnesses can also cause snoring, which can be made worse through the consumption of alcohol and other sedatives prior to bedtime.

Another sleep disorder is sleep apnea, a serious condition in which the body actually stops breathing dozens of times during the night. These frequent stops rob the brain and body of the oxygen it needs to refresh at night and stay healthy and alert.

The result often causes sufferers to wake up feeling tired because, unbeknownst to them, they did not get the proper amount of deep sleep they need to be at their best. It was this concern that sparked Dr. Blank to seek treatment for his snoring problem.

recovering the way it should from a good night’s sleep. My snoring was a sign that sleep was not as good as it could be.”

Test Run

To confirm his suspicion, Dr. Blank took a road few can travel. He participated in a hands-on dental workshop for sleep appliances designed to prevent snoring at the Florida Dental Convention this past June.

“I signed up for that workshop for my own self-interest and to serve my patients,” Dr. Blank explains. “What the workshop did first was require those of us who signed up for it to take an impression of our teeth and send it in a month ahead of time to a sleep appliance laboratory.

“Then, once we arrived at the workshop, we were given the appliances. There were a dozen people in the workshop, and when we attended the lecture we were each instructed to pair up and deliver each other’s appliance.”

The appliance Dr. Blank had fabricated is made of an acrylic material that is lined on the inside with a moldable plastic. The plastic allows the appliance to be custom-fitted to each patient’s teeth, a process that takes place during the second of two dental visits.

“The first visit is to review any records from sleep studies that the medical doctors may have ordered and to evaluate the patient’s teeth and airway,” Dr. Blank says. “If the patient meets the criteria for appliance therapy, impressions are taken and sent to the lab.

“The second visit is for fitting and delivery of the appliance, which is custom fit for comfort with the patient. The appliances are very smooth, and the goal is to hold the lower jaw forward. That brings the tongue forward, which opens the airway in the back and allows air to pass without the vibration on the palate or soft tissues.”

Known clinically as a comfort fit dorsal fin appliance, the snore guard is also adjustable. It contains a moveable block in the back that patients are instructed on how to adjust during the original fitting,

The moveable block allows the patient to recalibrate the appliance so that it opens the airway enough to reduce or eliminate symptoms. Patients are instructed to adjust the appliance by moving that little block forward if needed.

Beneficial Results

As with most snore guards, the Custom Fit Dorsal Fin takes some getting used to, but not much, according to Dr. Blank, who wore his for the first time while still attending the dental convention in Orlando.

“It probably took me two or three days to get used to wearing it,” Dr. Blank recalls. “Now, I feel odd if I don’t have it in at night. But just as it is with any appliance, the benefits far outweigh any minor changes that might come from it.”

Dr. Blank can attest to the fact that there are indeed benefits. He says he’s worn his snore guard to bed every night since returning home after the convention and that he is literally sleeping more soundly than ever.

“After that first night back home, I asked my wife the next morning if she heard any snoring the night before, and she said, No, not a thing,” Dr. Blank

reports. “It’s been all quiet at home ever since, so I’ve made two people happy.

“Not only is my wife sleeping better, but I’m sleeping better. I know because I feel fresher in the morning when I get up, and I have a Fitbit® that tells me how often I roll over or move in the middle of the night, and it’s showing far less activity than it used to.

“So, I’m hitting my goal of getting at least seven hours of actual sleep. Not just seven hours in bed, but seven hours of good sleep. That’s what this appliance is designed to do, because people want results. They want to stop snoring, get a good night’s sleep and feel healthier. This appliance helps them do that.”

FHCN article by Roy Cummings. Photo by Jordan Pysz.mkb

Gold Medal Winner

Dr. Blank was awarded gold medals by the Florida Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (FACD) Scientific Session competition, which is designed to reward excellence in clinical cosmetic dentistry. The FACD is an organization devoted to seeking improvements in the science and art of cosmetic dentistry.

For That Healthy Smile

Dr. Blank and his staff look forward to meeting the readers of Florida Health Care News. To schedule an appointment or learn what Dr. Blank can do for your smile through a complimentary cosmetic consultation, call or visit his office in Port St. Lucie at:

**184 NW Central Park Plaza
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Stephen G. Blank, DDS, is a 1982 graduate of Northwestern University Dental School in Chicago. He has since completed intensive continuing education studies. Dr. Blank has studied TMJ under Mark Piper, MD, DMD, at the Piper Education and Research Center. He has completed the course continuum at the Dawson Center for Advanced Dental Studies. Dr. Blank was a clinical instructor with the Hornbrook Group, teaching dentists from all parts of the country in live, hands-on courses on the various aspects of smile design, occlusion, full mouth reconstruction and complete patient care. He is a facilitator/mentor with the Dental Boot Kamp program. Dr. Blank enjoys teaching dental teams around the country.

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