



## **Oral Appliances for Obstructive Sleep Apnea- Frequently Asked Questions**

If you are one of many people who suffer from obstructive sleep apnea, then you probably are familiar with CPAP. (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure). CPAP is considered the most effective treatment for OSA. Unfortunately, research shows that about half of all CPAP users do not wear CPAP faithfully, or at all. Oral Appliances (OA) have been receiving a lot of attention lately and more people are turning to them as an alternative to CPAP therapy.

To be considered for this therapy, you should schedule a visit with a dentist who is specially trained and Board Certified in Dental Sleep Medicine. According to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, for mild to moderate sleep apnea, oral appliance therapy offers many of the same health benefits as CPAP.

### **What is an Oral Appliance (OA)?**

People use oral appliances as a treatment for snoring and obstructive sleep apnea. Although the appliances vary in appearance, there are two main categories:

1. Mandibular Advancement Devices (MAD): these devices hold your lower jaw in a protruding (forward) position during sleep. This creates more space at the back of the throat so air can flow freely through.
2. Tongue Retaining Devices: Hold your tongue in a forward position during sleep. This keeps the tongue from falling back into and blocking your airway.

Mandibular advancement devices are oral appliances that are custom-made by a dentist who specializes in Dental Sleep Medicine. The American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine compares the fit of an oral appliance to a sports mouth guard or an orthodontic retainer and states that research shows that oral appliance therapy is an effective treatment option for snoring and obstructive sleep apnea”.

### **Can an Oral Appliance be used in place of a CPAP machine to treat obstructive sleep apnea?**

Treatment with oral appliances is more effective in people who have mild to moderate obstructive sleep apnea. For people with severe sleep apnea or who already wear a CPAP unit, wearing an oral appliance may help you be able to decrease your CPAP pressure level.

### **What are the advantages and disadvantages of an oral appliance?**

Oral appliances are convenient, portable, and easy to use. On the other hand, the devices can cause minor side effects such as excessive salivation, dry mouth and temporary tooth and jaw discomfort. Most side effects can be managed by a dentist who is trained in dental sleep medicine.

### **Are there any people who shouldn't consider an oral appliance?**

While oral appliances are a good option for many people, your dental and medical history will be considered. These appliances may not be the best therapy for people with complex sleep apnea, or those with sleep apnea who also have severe lung or heart problems. People who wear dentures are

not a candidate for oral appliances, unless they decide to have implants placed to hold their dentures in place.

### **Will Insurance Pay for an Oral Appliance?**

Many insurance companies now recognize oral appliances and will pay for them directly without documentation of a failed trial of CPAP therapy. You can check with your insurance company to see if they require any documentation in order to pay for an Oral Appliance.

### **Will I Need Several Appointments Before I can get started with my Oral Appliance?**

An appliance impression can be taken at your first appointment, if your teeth are stable. At your second appointment, you will be given the appliance and can start using it. Your dentist will probably see you a few more times over the next few months to ensure you are comfortable with your device. After that, you will be scheduled for a follow-up sleep study or a Home Sleep Test (HST) to make sure that the appliance has been titrated appropriately for our apneas.

### **Can Oral Appliances Record Compliance Data Similar to CPAP Machines?**

CPAP machines are able to collect and store lots of different types of information. Compliance data is one type of information that is commonly accessed by your doctor, and the insurance company because it keeps track of the days/hours of usage for your machine.

Recently, oral appliances have also been able to incorporate a similar technology. Certain oral appliances can now be embedded with a compliance recording chip that stores data about how much you are using the appliance. This data can then be transferred off of the chip and used to create compliance reports.

### **Next Steps**

If you are interested in exploring the option of oral appliances and have a diagnosis of obstructive sleep apnea, you should begin a discussion with your physician. For more information or to find a dentist who specializes in dental sleep medicine, visit the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine at <http://aadsm.org/>.