

WHY DO CHILDREN SNORE ?

As I do my thorough exam, many times children present with enlarged tonsils. As I delve deeper into their medical and dental history, and pediatric sleep questionnaire, parents are concerned that their children snore. Occasional snoring in children is normal. If snoring is persistent or signs of sleep apnea exist, your child may be at higher risk for growth and development problems. I wanted to answer some questions I recently get asked.

1. What is Snoring and Sleep Apnea? Snoring is the sound of vibration of the airway when it is partially blocked while sleeping. The sound may be soft, like air rushing through a straw, or a loud and unpleasant snoring or grunting. It is not harmful if your child snores from time to time. Snoring more than three times per week may be a sign of sleep apnea and is potentially harmful. Sleep apnea is a breathing disorder; an airway blockage disrupts or interrupts normal sleep. In addition to fatigue, this can also lead to growth, learning and behavioral issues. Other signs may include high blood pressure, morning headaches, learning difficulties and failure to thrive. Up to six percent of children/adolescents may have this harmful condition.

2. What causes Snoring and Sleep Apnea? Snoring may result from temporary airway obstruction experienced with a common cold, sinus infections, allergies or enlarged tonsils. Sleep apnea risk factors are overgrown/enlarged tonsils and adenoids, obesity, abnormal facial development and neuromuscular disorder.

3. Is Snoring and Sleep Apnea normal during my child's growth and development? Occasional snoring is common when associated with illness or allergies, however frequent snoring is NOT normal in a child's development.

4. What can I do to address abnormal Snoring and Sleep apnea? If you are concerned that your child may have abnormal snoring or sleep apnea, your child's physician should determine if further evaluation or treatment is necessary.

5. What will happen if Sleep Apnea is not addressed in my child? Untreated sleep apnea is dangerous. It can lead to learning difficulties, behavioral issues and affect growth and development.

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