

Who Can Quiet Your Snoring? Perhaps Your Dentist

Sleep apnea is not just annoying, it's a serious medical concern.

By Gayle Kesten

LEONA DELVALLE HADN'T SLEPT well for years. A persistent snorer, she suffered from a condition known as sleep apnea.

But after she began wearing a simple oral appliance offered by her dentist, she finally found relief. In fact she slept so soundly that her husband felt compelled to check her pulse.

"I told him, 'If I'm dead, I'll still be dead in the morning. Leave me alone!'" DelValle, 63, tells Newsmax. "I now get seven hours a night of restful sleep."

DelValle reclaimed her life after a doctor recognized she had obstructive sleep apnea. "The fatigue is gone, so I'm not afraid to drive," she says.

The disorder, commonly mistaken simply as "snoring," affects about 12 million Americans and is characterized by frequent cessations in breathing during sleep — as much as 60 times per hour, says the American Sleep Apnea Association.

Many believe snoring is a harmless malady, but it can lead to weight



SEEKING GOOD SLEEP Drs. Jeffrey Rein, left, and Neal Seltzer consult a patient about her troubled sleep patterns.



gain, high blood pressure, depression, strokes, and heart attacks.

DelValle went to see Drs. Jeffrey Rein and Neal Seltzer, who run a Long Island, New York, dental practice which serves patients from around the United States. For 20 years, these dentists have specialized in oral appliances used to combat sleep apnea.

Other sleep apnea devices are cumbersome. The best known is the CPAP machine, which pumps air through a mask into a person's nose and down the airway to keep the passage unobstructed during sleep.

Many find the mask irritating and simply pull it off during sleep.

"When you're lying down, you start to lose muscle tone and your jaw drops back. The CPAP is like a vacuum cleaner in reverse," Seltzer tells Newsmax. "It's a well-proven treatment, if you can tolerate it."

But many people can't, Rein says. For those with mild to moderate sleep apnea, a custom oral appliance may be best. It works by simply pushing a person's jaw slightly forward, opening up the obstructed air passage in the back of the mouth.

"[Patients] have to have enough teeth to hold the appliance in place," Rein tells Newsmax. "They might need dentistry beforehand."

The appliances Seltzer and Rein use are approved by the Food and Drug Administration, and cost about \$3,000. "More insurance companies are starting to cover it," Rein says, and it can be used with the CPAP.

Drs. Rein and Seltzer can be found at www.longislandsmile.com □

ARE YOU AT RISK?

► THESE ARE SOME COMMON TRAITS among those diagnosed with obstructive sleep apnea, according to the Mayo Clinic:

- A neck circumference greater than 17 inches for men and 15 inches for women
- Hypertension
- Diabetes

- A narrow throat or an airway that is blocked by enlarged tonsils or adenoids
- Consistent nasal congestion at night, regardless of the cause
- Alcohol, sedatives, and tranquilizers use
- Smoking
- Excess weight and fat deposits around the upper airway that may obstruct normal breathing patterns □