

Introduction to Oral Appliance Therapy

For patients with sleep apnea, the airway is floppy and can collapse when you are sleeping. This causes the oxygen levels to fall and the carbon dioxide levels to rise. This can cause your brain to wake up briefly in order to open up the airway and normalize those levels. Once you fall asleep again, the cycle continues. This can lead to poor sleep (from the awakenings) and high blood pressure or stroke (from the low oxygen levels and the adrenaline surge that happens when you wake up repeatedly).

Oral Appliance Therapy: an oral appliance is custom-fit by a sleep dentist. The idea is to bring the jaw forward in an attempt to open up the airway. This helps to prevent the repeated airway collapse of sleep apnea and can result in more restful sleep. Rather than splinting the airway open with pressurized air (like CPAP), it makes your upper airway larger and less prone to collapse. This is a very reasonable and effective method of treating mild-to-moderate sleep apnea and is an excellent choice for those who are active and travel frequently.



There are several types of oral appliances available. A sleep dentist will be able to evaluate and recommend the best type of device for your unique therapy needs. Once the device is in proper position, a follow-up sleep test is typically performed to make sure the sleep apnea is fully treated.