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Attention All Mouth Breathers – 5 Important Reasons Why You Must Breathe Through Your Nose



If you're a chronic mouth breather because of a stuffy nose, you're not alone. As the weather chills and allergies and colds abound, and nasal congestion becomes a common trend, mouth breathing inevitably follows-especially when you're sleeping. I'm sure you've seen many passengers asleep on the subways and trains, head and pitched back, mouth wide open, and snoring louder than a diesel engine. Mouth breathing can surely ruin your social image, but that's nothing compared to the havoc it can wreak on your health.

5 Potent Benefits of Breathing through Your nose

One of the most important reasons to breathe through your nose is because of a gas called nitric oxide that's made by your nose and sinus mucous membranes. This gas is produced in small amounts, but when inhaled into the lungs, it significantly enhances your lung's capacity to absorb oxygen, increasing oxygen absorption in your lungs by 10-25%. Nitric oxide also can kill bacteria, viruses and other germs. This is why you often hear fitness and [yoga](#) instructors emphasize inhaling and exhaling through your nose during workouts.

Also, if you can't breathe well through your nose, your sense of smell will suffer and therefore your sense of taste, since your smell and taste buds are connected. This can lead to disturbances in your appetite and satiation levels, wreaking havoc on those struggling with weight issues.

Your nose also has vital nervous system connections to your lungs and heart. Not breathing well through your nose can alter your heart rate and blood pressure, as well as increase your stress responses.

Your nose makes about 2 pints of mucous every day. If your nose isn't working properly and mucous isn't cleared, the stagnant mucous can lead to infections such as sinusitis or ear infections, not to mention bad breath.

Lastly, not breathing well through your nose can aggravate snoring or [obstructive sleep apnea](#). Nasal congestion alone doesn't cause [obstructive sleep apnea](#), but it can definitely aggravate it. If your palate and tongue structures are predisposed to falling back easily due to sleeping on your back and muscle relaxation in deep sleep, then having a stuffy nose can aggravate further collapse downstream. Untreated [obstructive sleep apnea](#) can lead to chronic fatigue, depression, anxiety, weight gain, high blood pressure, heart disease, heart attack and stroke.

Knowing all these benefits of breathing through your nose, however, doesn't help much if you don't know why you're not able to do so. To stop mouth breathing, the first thing you must do is to figure out what's blocking up your nose.

What Can Stop Up Your Nose

Nasal congestion is something everyone experiences now and again. Yet, if you're trying to prevent this from happening it's important to explore the various reasons behind why and when this occurs.

Here are five of the most common reasons for a stuffy nose:

“I Have a Deviated Septum“

By definition everyone has a slightly crooked ([deviated](#)) [nasal septum](#). There are various reasons for having a [deviated septum](#), including trauma, but the most common reason is no reason at all. It's just the way your nose developed. What's more important than how deviated your septum is is what's happening in front of an around your septum.

Wings in Your Nose

Turbinates are wing-like structures that attach to the sidewalls of the nasal cavity, opposite the midline nasal septum. They normally smooth, warm, humidify, and filter the air that you breathe, but they also become enlarged and produce mucous when inflamed. Turbinates also swell and shrink alternating from side to side, which is a normal neurologic process called the nasal cycle.

Is It An Infection or Allergies?

If you have allergies, a cold or any kind of infection, then your turbinates will swell up, clogging your nose with lots of mucous production. Contrary to popular belief, the color of the mucous has no relation to bacterial vs. viral infections.

Flimsy Nostrils

Once you have inflammation and swelling inside your nose, for some people, depending on the configuration of your nose, your nostrils can literally cave in as you inhale. Different noses have differently shaped nostrils with various nostril thicknesses. The more narrow your nose, the more likely your nostrils can cave in. People who undergo cosmetic rhinoplasty are more at risk years later, since narrowing the nose can weaken the support structures of the nose.

A Nervous Nose?

Some people's noses are extra sensitive, especially to weather changes, like temperature, humidity, and pressure changes. Certain chemicals, scents and odors can set off a reaction as well. Many people mistakenly think this reaction is an allergy, but it's really your nasal nervous system over-reacting to the weather or to odors. One of the most common reasons is from poor quality sleep, which causes a low-grade stress response, which can heighten your senses.

It's All Under Your Nose

A chronically stuffy nose doesn't happen by itself. Usually it's part of a bigger picture, where the entire upper and lower jaws are more narrow and constricted, in addition to more narrow nasal cavities. I've described this process in my book, *Sleep Interrupted*, where due to modern human's eating soft, mushy, processed foods, our jaws are much more narrow than normal, with dental crowding. Bottle-feeding, which is another modern, Western phenomenon, is also thought to aggravate this problem.

If you have a stuffy nose, it can also aggravate soft palate and tongue collapse when in deep sleep, due to muscle relaxation. With more obstruction, more stomach juices are suctioned up into the throat and nose, causing more swelling and more nasal congestion. All this from smaller and more narrow jaws.



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Posted on Tuesday, December 1, 2009

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40 thoughts on “Attention All Mouth Breathers – 5 Important Reasons Why You Must Breathe Through Your Nose”



Brezr says:
December 2, 2009 at 8:57 pm

What kind of breathing aids have you used to help open your nasal passages?



Steven Park says:
December 3, 2009 at 7:07 am

I'm hosting a special Ask Dr. Park teleseminar on nasal questions such as yours. Please feel free to ask your question there and you'll get the information to access the call. Here's the link to ask your question:

<http://doctorstevenpark.com/ask-dr-park-about-your-nose-sleep-apnea>



Anna says:
December 5, 2009 at 9:05 am

Excellent summary! I've definitely noticed a huge correlation to how well I sleep and how well I feel and function the next day to my ability to breath freely through my nose at night. I get the best sleep (and therefore better days) if I use adhesive nasal strips. The next best is using Max-Air Nose cones (I'm more aware of them and they sometimes fall out).

Candy Cook says:
December 6, 2009 at 7:20 pm



I have recently been waking up in the middle of the night with severe allergy symptoms. Is it possible to become allergic to a cpap machine? Any input would be appreciated , as this is causing extreme loss of sleep.



James says:
January 4, 2010 at 5:40 pm

Great information Dr Park.

An additional reason for more difficulty when mouth breathing is that opening the mouth rotates the jaw downward. This narrows the throat by pushing the hyoid back slightly and by reducing the tension on the tongue muscle making the tongue more prone to fall backwards.

Normal
0

false
false
false

EN-US
X-NONE
X-NONE

MicrosoftInternetExplorer4



Steven Park says:
January 4, 2010 at 7:19 pm

Great point, James. Many of these over-the-internet chin straps function by keeping the mouth closed, and in some people, it can work, but for most, since they have nasal congestion due to structural reasons, they won't be able to sleep with it on. Sometimes, a mandibular advancement device for sleep apnea can cause the tongue to fall back and aggravate the problem, especially if it's thick.



kenneth kullmann says:
January 25, 2010 at 12:29 pm

I have begun using a Wendy's plastic straw but to about 1 1/2 inches long to insert in my left nostril because the nasal passageway collapses when I breathe in. Is there damage which my be done by this? Does it interfere with the turbonnate function? Any suggestions? I saw nose cone mentioned. What is it?

Thankd



Steven Park says:
January 25, 2010 at 1:55 pm

Kenneth,

It sounds like you have nasal valve collapse. Sinus cones and Nozovents are two options for you if Breathe Right strips don't help. Ultimately, you'll have to see an ENT surgeon to figure out if it's from internal nasal congestion, or from naturally flimsy nostrils.



Tom S says:
February 4, 2010 at 7:39 pm

Hi Dr. Park.

I'm 18 and have been breathing through my mouth for as long as I remember. When I attempt to breath through my nose, after a few minutes, I simply feel like I'm not getting enough air, and continue to breath through my mouth. I don't have any congestion and am not overweight. Do you have any tips or suggestions?

Thanks!



Steven Park says:
February 4, 2010 at 8:18 pm

Tom S,

The three most common reason for nasal congestion are deviated septum, enlarged turbinates (mostly from allergies) and nasal valve collapse. If Breathe Right Strips help, then you have nasal valve collapse. See an ENT for a more definitive diagnosis.



Judith T. says:
February 25, 2010 at 10:43 am

Dr.Park,

I have a 14 year old son who has been a mouth breather all his life. His nose has been stuffy and has no sense smell for many years. I just came across your page and now realize there may be a connection with his multiple issues and would like advice. He was diagnosed with asthma at about 5 years old. The current controller he is on for that is advair. He has been hospitalized with pneumonia about 8 times since age 7. I now think this may more be related to his reflux when sleeping than asthma. We did take him to an allergy clinic and he recieved shots twice a week. His nose remained stuffy and blocked and we stopped the shots after 6 months. He has a bad deviated septum and we just assumed this is the cause. He had

frequent strep throat and very large tonsills so we took him to an ENT hoping a tonsillectomy would also help him sleep better. The ENT removed the tonsills, adenoids, and did a procedure on his turbinates. He stated the deviated septum should be repaired but we decided to wait. It has been a year since the surgery and his nose is still blocked and can't smell anything so we were considering the repair. The reason I started doing some research was a result of an orthodontic evaluation he just had. He has major teeth crowding and a very narrow palate. The orthodontist stated that the expander he will need may also help with the nasal passages and deviated septum. Now I am even starting to think his learning and attention issues at school may be more related to sleep problems than ADHD. Especially since we have no family history of ADHD. We hated putting him on medication for that. He has three siblings, all very healthy. no asthma, ADHD, allergies, reflux, nothing. Thanks for your time, any guidance greatly appreciated!



jon taylor says:
August 28, 2010 at 1:51 am

Hello. I havnt been able to breathe through my nose for a few years. I've been diagnosed as having enlarged turbinates. I've used nasal sprays to no avail. Now the cheek area at both sides of my nose seem to have become inflamed. Its hard to explain but to simplify I would say that its as if my cheeks are pushing/squeezing my nose out from its natural position. The tip, columella and nostrils are constantly stinging and my nose seems to have become very bulbous. I won't go into the details of how my throat is very sore as I'm not sure if its relevant. My question is: Is it possible for fluid to build up at the sides of nose and push the nose into an unnatural position? Any advice would be much appreciated. Many thanks! Jon



Steven Park says:
August 28, 2010 at 4:31 am

Having any nasal congestion can back up fluid in the face/cheek area. Did you ever see an ENT doctor about your problem?



RoseMary Stewart says:
September 21, 2012 at 11:14 pm

Dr. I recently began wearing a sleep mask and was told it would help my blood pressure to go down. I am a mouth breather which I am unable to control in my sleep as you know. I was a EEG tech for 42 years and I know that breathing through my mouth causes hyperventilation syndrome which constricts the blood vessels and reduces o2 to the brain. Why don't the sleep experts know this. I wake up with pressure like 200 over 100 most every morning. I have two 100% blocked carotids and am at extremely high risk for heart attack and stroke. My machine ramps up through the night and I usually awaken about 4am with air leaking out from the mask. I feel like I'm talking to people that don't speak the same language. Obviously I need somethin to keep my mouth from falling open . Please do you have a suggestion for me? I know and have been tol I ammone of 2% of people that haven't stroked due to my condition. Advice please, Thank you



Kelly says:
March 3, 2013 at 4:58 am

I can't breath through my nose. Like I can for a minute or two but not for long. I've breathed through my mouth ever since I was born. My friends tell me that I should try to not breath through my mouth for the day. I tried I ended up not doing it because I could not breath at all. My friend say that I also have asthma I thonk my do but my parents tell me I do not. I think I do because there are times my friend say that I need to go to the nurse because I can't breath properly or not at all. The teacher ends up not believing. The school nurse told me to just put my head down for a while which turn in to 30 minutes. Please Help



Jeff Todd says:
April 5, 2013 at 6:50 am

Read all of this website <http://www.normalbreathing.com/> it says never repeat never breathe through your mouth and tells you how to breathe as shallow as possible in order to maximise oxygen levels which are related to CO2 levels in the lungs. Deep breathing will also cause you major problems. Following the advice from this website has helped me with my COPD but it also applies to anyones wellbeing.



Anti snoring devices Reviews says:
June 17, 2013 at 10:11 am

By knowing one who snores sincerely piercing if he/she sleeps, it's about time to deliver these people a condition alert.

Here is my web blog :: [Anti snoring devices Reviews](#)



kal kooner says:
May 18, 2014 at 5:26 pm

I'm 42 for as long as I can remember, I have never breathed through my nose. My taste buds smell not working very good. which I know is through breathing in mouth. my left ear hearing at about 70 %, ok.



LOU ANNE BAKER says:
August 2, 2014 at 2:33 pm

dr. park, I'm so relieved to find you and your wealth of knowledge in obstructive sleep apnea, for which I have been diagnosed. from an overnight sleep study, I slept 4 of 6 hours, went to the bathroom at midpoint; incurred up to 36 stops in breathing/hour; severe snoring; insomnia; tired upon wake up; a rather dismal quality of life! tonight I get fitted for CPAP overnight and have pressure identified that will hopefully restore and refresh me to experiencing life so much better. I do not nose breathe properly and am trying the Buteyko Breathing Method... and also found Oral Myofunctional Therapy as something to try as well. I did your simple test of placing both forefingers on each side of nose over sinuses, applying pressure and and outwardly raising toward temples... sure enough, the more pressure

applied, the more I can BREATHE! upon release, it's like a depressing reality to return to inadequate breathing from such narrow airways. I would like to consider a surgery for this, or at least identify if it's my turbinates that are closing, or nasal collapse, or inflammation is the cause or causes... do you have any recommendations? yes, I'm overweight, but I had this when I was not overweight. I want to do whatever I can to open up my airway! thank you



Steven Park says:
August 4, 2014 at 9:52 pm

Ms. Baker,

Your best bet is to see an ENT surgeon that can help you with this condition. Remember, it's important to have optimal nasal breathing for CPAP to work well. Good luck!



LOU ANNE BAKER says:
August 4, 2014 at 10:24 pm

thank you for the advice... I scheduled a consultation aug. 18 (soonest!) with an ENT specialist for a sinus CT to elect proper scoping, maybe try a nasal steroid? no strip or spray is strong enough, but I haven't had steroid treatment. thank you for the follow up, i'll be sure to comment after more results. thank you again!



James Kent says:
December 10, 2014 at 12:04 pm

Hi ,

I have been diagnosed with a deviated septum in my left nose. My sleep is quite poor as both the nostrils are closed while sleeping in the side position. I am highly allergic to dust, pollen, scented perfumes and so on. Is there any possibility of improving my sleep without surgery. Thanks in advance.



Jeff Chia says:
January 1, 2015 at 9:04 am

What is the solution for those with obstructive sleep apnea but cannot tolerate CPAP due to blocked nose issues?



Steven Park says:
January 1, 2015 at 11:13 am

Jeff,

For nasal congestion, it's important to see an ENT to address it medically or surgically. Opening up the nose has been found to significantly increase CPAP effectiveness.



manjunatha says:
January 5, 2015 at 6:28 am

my son 3yr 7months he is breathin gfrom his mouth since two and half year i consulted the paediatricians and ENT sergeons but of no use they tell he is having lack of immunity and as he grows up it will go automatically and he developed adenoids and tonsils plz give me the soution



LisaM says:
January 29, 2015 at 12:46 am

I just came across this article. I have little sense of smell and I snore. That only started in the last 5 years. I have gained a lot of weight due to My Trigenimal Neuralgia. My question is that lately my nostrils seem to close up slightly. They are not stuffy and as soon as I move my nose it opens up. What can cause this?



sayantan says:
May 20, 2015 at 11:13 am

today my nose and mouth are closed and i can not breath . my throat is completely dry . i fill very bad and i think that I will die at this time.
so why it happen i dont know
please tell



Offended says:
May 21, 2015 at 10:53 am

This article was rude, If could breath through my nose I would. If I COULD. Obviously the writer of this article has no idea what it's like to live with a deviated septum AND allergies.

-Offended



Lydia says:
June 20, 2015 at 9:07 am

my child has itching ears mouth breather sleeping problem,when given anti biotics she becomes better,the doctors did x.tray the adeniods sinus are normal?why this?



joyce parker says:
September 25, 2015 at 11:26 am

I have been breathing through my mouth since I was a baby. I am 67 yrs old. I can breathe once in a while with my mouth closed, but my airway is still opened very little. I try to keep my mouth closed,but I feel like I am not getting enough air. Now my smell has gone & taste buds also. I can smell & taste very little. My mouth flies wide open when I fall asleep even if I try to keep it shut. Even when I had TMJ surgery they had to put something around my head to keep my mouth closed. People said I should go to an ENT dr, but someone told me it

didn't do any good. I am so tired of being able to breathe through my nose, taste my food, or smell anything. Could you suggest what I should do. Now I know I am old, but I am still very much alive for my age. Thank you so much!



John Stewart says:
February 14, 2016 at 4:03 pm

When I was 14yrs I was told I had to stop competitive swimming as I continually got severe ear infections, otherwise I would probably be deaf by now. I started plying rugby and during my sporting life have a one or two belts on the nose. I was offered basal surgery to cleR sinuses when I was 19yrs but declined. I am now 62yrs and in Oct 2015 got a minor chest infection that took for every to clear. I also got nasal congestion and along with central treating being turned up ended up with dry nasal passage. Left nostril nearly closed as a result. Been to my GP twice and given antibiotics , nasal spray and steroids spray. Three weeks ago I was given steroid cream to put inside nose.

Passage seems to have opened slightly and I can breathe through my nose. However it appears that I have a deviated septum as my right nasal passage us considerably larger than left. I do not want surgery. What are my alternatives if there are any



John Stewart says:
February 14, 2016 at 4:08 pm

When I was 14yrs I was told I had to stop competitive swimming as I continually got severe ear infections. I started playing rugby and during my sporting life have a one or two belts on the nose. I am now 62. I have had nasal congestion an a dry nasal passage on and off for 4 months.Left nostril nearly closed. Dr gave me antibiotics , nasal and steroids spray then steroid cream to put inside nose.

Passage seems to have opened slightly and I can breathe through my nose.Appears I have a deviated septum as my right nasal passage us considerably larger than left. I do not want surgery. What are my alternatives if there are any



John Stewart says:
February 14, 2016 at 4:11 pm

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Steven Park says:
February 16, 2016 at 11:32 am

Mr. Stewart,

Structural problems such as a deviated septum are difficult to address fully with medical therapy. Decongestant can work to various degrees, and also have side effects. Vigorous nasal saline irrigation (such as a Neti-pot) can also help, but can be cumbersome. If you have flimsy nostrils then nasal dilator strips (Breathe Right) can help. Internal dilators can also be found online. Good luck.



John Stewart says:
February 16, 2016 at 1:17 pm

Athanks for your reply to my problems. Have just bought Nasal Dilators from Max- air yesterday do will see how they go. I am using Sali e cleanse as well. However have visited dentist today as I was having discomfort from upper jaw on left side under my sinus. This had been going on for several months but only decided to have it checked out yesterday. Appear I have a problem with two of my molars. Dentist has crated yhem to find which one or other is causing problem. Cold air being blasted at it wasn't very comfortable. Hopefully thT is the root of the problem



Sharon King says:
April 6, 2016 at 2:28 pm

I have c.o.p.d and I sleep with my mouth wide open. I can breathe through my nose fine when I'm awake. It's just when I'm asleep and when I wake up my mouth feels like sandpaper. I also wake up with mucous in my mouth and throat which is sickening. Is there any help for me?



Edward L. says:
July 3, 2016 at 11:45 am

Hi,
I have narcolepsy and OSA. I personally don't believe that the two are entirely unrelated. Recent work shows that narcoleptics tend to overproduce histamine cells, making us vulnerable to allergy symptoms, such as chronic nasal blocking, leading to mouth breathing. However histamine over-production is also now being looked at carefully as the reason for the depletion, and non-regeneration of the hypocretin cells, that cause narcolepsy. Previously it was understood narcolepsy as being an auto-immune attack. I'd like to tackle my snoring as this is coupled with EDS are the worst symptoms. From this perspective do you have any advice? Thanks



Gary Hoover says:
August 24, 2016 at 12:10 pm

I have restricted lung disease and have had problems my entire life from age 25 to 68 breathing thru my nose. This has caused me many problems waking up very tired all the time, as I had sleep apnea and did not know it. Back in the days my dr said your too young to be tired. Hello. 2013 the VA did a sleep study and found I quill breathing 70 times an hour and give me a C pac machine. The numbers were set so high I could not use it so fast forward to 2015 I went to hospital because I got a lung disease and couldn't breath. Dr said you need to

use Cpac machine I told him the problem he lowered the numbers and it worked. Now problem was open mouth sleeping,I got dry mouth soooo bad I couldn't sleep. I ask every one Drs friends,nurses,you name it I ask. My wife said tape your mouth shut and try that,also my sister said it. It worked so good I could not and still can't believe how good I feel. I am almost 70 and feel better than when I was 30. I still have the lung disease but sleeping with the Cpac and breathing thru my nose has made my life much better. I told my contact at VA and she said we have a chin strap that fits under chin to hold your mouth shut while sleeping. I got it five days ago and it works perfect. I now only stop breathing 3.5 times per hr vs 70. This is from using the c pac machine but the breathing thru my nose has made a huge difference in my life. I pray this will hel someone as it has helped me



Amy day says:
January 2, 2017 at 8:28 pm

Why does my throat burn when I breathe either with my nose or throat. It's painful so please he'll me. Thank you,
Amy Davidson

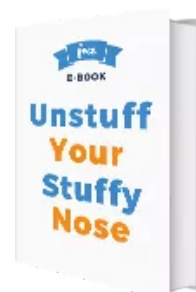


james cobb says:
June 23, 2017 at 11:20 am

when I wear my cpap I start yawning, I can stop it by laying on side some of the time but I always roll back onto my back and start again which wakes me up. Ive explained this to my d Dr. and he says It will get better 6 months in no luck. I am thinking of trying a mouth piece or surgery and maybe a different Dr.

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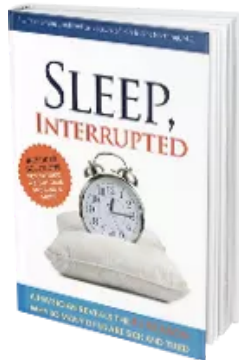
About Dr. Park

Dr. Steven Y. Park is an author and surgeon who helps people who are always sick or tired to once again reclaim their health and energy.

His passion is to identify and empower people to overcome ***sleep-related breathing problems***, which most people don't realize is the real reason for many of their common medical ailments.

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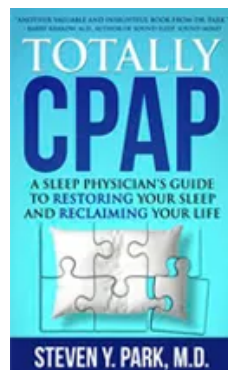


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ABOUT DR. PARK

Dr. Steven Y. Park is an author and surgeon who helps people who are always sick or tired to once again reclaim their health and energy. For the past 13 years in private practice and 4 years in academia, he has helped thousands of men and women breathe better, sleep better, and live more fulfilling lives.

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