

Snoring – Can it be surgically removed?

Your doctor has asked me to look at your nose, mouth and throat holes to see if surgery might be the answer. The **2 most common common surgeries for snoring** are:

1. **Septoplasty** – a **nose operation** where the middle wall (septum) inside your nose is made straight and the side bones (turbinates) are usually torn or burned out.
2. **Uvulopalatoplasty**– that is where we cut out your **uvula** (the dangly thing in the mouth), **soft palate** and if you have them, **tonsils** with a knife or laser. It is **very painful** and the “**success**” **rate about 2 years later is 50%**. (About the same “success” as the septoplasty.)

There are other, more involved surgeries such as **cutting out parts of your tongue, fracturing your jaw and facial bones** to move them forward or even putting **a hole (and breathing tube) into you neck**. The more surgery we do, the more we might improve the snoring. But surgery is nowhere near as successful (or safe and painless) as other options. Some of our patients have had 5 different surgeries and still snore the same!

So why can't we just fix snoring with a nose operation or chopping out the uvula? It's because your **upper airway** is essentially a **couple of tubes (nose holes and mouth) that become a bigger tube (throat)**. So if there is a narrowing **anywhere** along the way, like **muscles collapsing in the back of the nose** at night time or your **tongue** falling backwards a bit, you will snore. (**Stick your tongue out and try snoring.**) The other problem is that a lot of snoring is the fault of **your brain not telling your lungs to breathe at properly at night**. We call that “**central sleep apnea**”.

So who cares about sleep apnea? Mainly your **heart and brain**. See if your lungs don't move at night, your **heart has to work a lot harder** to put blood into them. So over time it gets bigger and stronger. The problem is, the heart can't grow outwards (it's too tethered by many important structures and a tough heart sack) so it **slowly grows inwards**. As your heart muscle gets bigger, your **heart chambers get smaller so less and less blood goes to your brain and body**. So the heart has to beat **faster and faster** and soon you either get a **heart attack or a stroke**. The tragedy is that they are **preventable** if we just make things easier on your lungs at night. So **you absolutely must have a sleep study.**

Here are some **non-invasive, safe and very effective ways to reduce snoring**:

1. **Elevate the head of your mattress 6 inches**. (You don't snore when you are standing right?)
2. Achieve “**optimal weight**”. (I'm not asking for a 6-pack here. But 300 lbs is a bit much.)
3. Get an “**Dental Appliance**” from your Dentist. (It's what the guys wear in the NHL and NFL.) **Snore Guard** or similar devices from your Pharmacy can also be effective (way cheaper).
4. Try **Nose Cones** – you can re-use them and they are cheaper than the Breatheright strips. Using **sinus rinses** also helps a ton of people by remove allergies, dust/smoke particles and viruses.
5. **Avoid sleeping pills and alcohol**. The pills shut of your brain and **alcohol makes your nose congested**.
6. Most importantly. Be open to a **CPAP machine**. They are no longer the “Darth Vader” masks they used to be. These days they are way more **comfortable and over 90% effective for sleep apnea**. (About as good as a total of 5 very painful and dangerous snoring surgeries!)

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