

Oral Appliance Therapy for Obstructive Sleep Apnea

PATIENT EDUCATION GUIDE

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF CHEST PHYSICIANS

What is an Oral Appliance?

It is a device worn in the mouth that helps improve sleep quality by controlling sleep apnea and snoring. An oral appliance is held in place by the teeth. Many different types of oral appliances are available, but the most widely used and thoroughly researched is the Mandibular Repositioning Appliance, or MRA - sometimes called a Mandibular Advancing Device (or MAD).



How does an Oral Appliance work?

The MRA gently positions the lower jaw and tongue slightly forward. This opens space in the back of the throat and reduces tissue obstruction, helping keep the patient's airway open and clear during sleep.

Is Oral Appliance Therapy a medical service?

Yes. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has classified oral appliances as Class II medical devices, and many insurers include coverage for this therapy under their medical plans. Also, criteria developed by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) define obstructive sleep apnea as a medical condition that can be treated by dental professionals who have advanced training in dental sleep medicine. Patients are referred for this treatment by their physicians only after a sleep study establishes a diagnosis of obstructive sleep apnea.

What are the indications for Oral Appliance Therapy?

An oral appliance may be recommended to treat snoring, or as an option for patients with mild to moderate obstructive sleep apnea. In some cases, it may be an effective alternative for patients who cannot use CPAP (Continuous Positive Airways Pressure) equipment.



Who provides this service?

Dentists with advanced training in the field of dental sleep medicine are recommended for fitting and installing oral appliances.

How do I find the right provider?

Many dentists with specialized training in dental sleep medicine and oral appliance therapy are also members of the American Academy of Orofacial Pain (AAOP). You can find a partial list of these dentists on the AAOP Web site: www.aaop.org. There is also a dentist search feature on the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine Web site at <http://www.aadsm.org/News.aspx?id=1103>. In addition, many physicians who practice sleep medicine can provide referrals to dentists offering oral appliance therapy.

This project is a collaboration between the American Academy of Orofacial Pain and the American College of Chest Physicians.

