



HELENA FAMILY DENTISTRY

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Breathing well through your nose is essential to optimal oral health, as well as overall health. You must breathe out of your nose to breathe well and sleep well. Grinding your teeth at night is oftentimes related to poor sleep, which may be caused by an airway issue, such as trouble breathing out of your nose.

If you have difficulty breathing through your nose at night, or grind your teeth at night, the following may help:

Buteyko mouth taping - if you can breathe well through your nose throughout the day, but your mouth opens while sleeping, “reminder tape” at night can be beneficial. Place a small strip of breathable tape (3M Micropore tape) vertically across your lips with tabs folded at the ends to allow for easy removal.

Nasal dilators – Products such as Breathe Right strips or Mute nasal dilators can help open the airway

Nasal cleaning and decongestion – Xlear xylitol nasal spray is a natural product to help alleviate congestion and clean the nasal passageways. A neti pot or saline rinse can also be used for cleaning. A Neti Stik or white flower essential oil can be used for decongestion.

Nasal unblocking exercise – from “The Oxygen Advantage” by Patrick McKeown

- 1) Sit upright on a straight-backed chair.
- 2) Normalize and calm your breathing. Take a small breath (two seconds) in through your nose, if possible, and a small breath out (three seconds). If you are unable to take a breath in through your nose, take a tiny breath in through the corner of your mouth.
- 3) Pinch your nose and hold your breath. Keep your mouth closed.
- 4) Gently nod your head or sway your body until you feel that you cannot hold your breath any longer. (Hold your nose until you feel a relatively strong need for air.)
- 5) When you need to breathe in, let go of your nose and breathe gently through it, in and out, with your mouth closed. Avoid taking a deep breath when you breathe in, and calm your breathing as soon as possible by focusing on relaxation. Repeat to yourself ‘relax and breathe less’.

- 6) Continue to do this exercise until you can breathe through your nose fully. If your nose does not become totally unblocked, wait about one minute and perform this exercise again. Initially you may need to do this a number of times before your nose is completely unblocked.

Allergy medication – if the above tips are not effective, allergy medication may be needed, such as Flonase, Claritin, or Zyrtec

Diet – Avoid eating close to bedtime (3-4 hours is ideal) and do not have alcohol or caffeine in the evening

Breathing apps – there are multiple apps available for download to help you learn to breathe better during the day

“Unstuff Your Stuffy Nose” by Dr. Steven Park is a free e-book available for download online, which contains useful additional information

If you still are unable to breathe through your nose successfully at night, you will need to see an otolaryngologist (ENT physician) or an allergist for resolution. Myofunctional therapy, orthodontics, or breathing behavior therapy are adjunctive therapies.