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Surgical Procedures for Snoring – Guide for Patients

Snoring is a common problem, seen in upwards of 45% of men and 30% of women. Snoring can decrease a person and family's quality of life. In some instances, snoring can be treated. Based on discussion between you and your doctor, surgical options can be considered.

Snoring versus Sleep Apnea

These two common problems often exist together, but can present separately. Some patients can snore without any other issues called - *primary snoring*. Sometimes, snoring can be a symptom of a more serious disorder called – *sleep apnea*.

It is very important you be screened for sleep apnea, as leaving sleep apnea untreated can have long term implications, such as high blood pressure, decreased energy or even increased risk of heart attack and stroke.

Once your screening tests are completed, you will meet with your sleep surgeon to discuss the results and to review your body's anatomy and discuss possible treatment options.

Medical Options

If the diagnosis of moderate or severe obstructive sleep apnea is made, you will be recommended a trial of CPAP therapy. The choice is to attend a sleep clinic or to be evaluated by a respirologist first, who can then arrange either further investigations or CPAP trial through the hospital.

Surgical Options

If the diagnosis of mild obstructive sleep apnea or simply snoring is made, you will be evaluated to see if a surgical option is possible. Occasionally, in moderate or severe sleep apnea, due to issues with CPAP intolerance or lack of compliance, surgery may be an option. The following are the types of surgical options available and will be discussed by your surgeon based upon your individual anatomy.

- Tonsillectomy
- Palatoplasty
- Septoplasty/Image Guided Sinus Surgery
- Base of Tongue Reduction

COBLATION Base of Tongue and Turbinoplasty

In some cases, doctors recommend a surgery that shrinks the turbinates, the redundancy of the palate/tonsils and reduce the prominence of the base of tongue.

To do this, a surgeon uses a special needle-like device that heats the structures by using a heat source via radiofrequency energy waves. This causes scar tissue to form, reducing the turbinates' size and the prominence of the base of tongue. These procedures fall under the categories of COBLATION turbinoplasty/COBLATION of the base of tongue or radiofrequency reduction.

The procedure(s) takes approximately 30 minutes and is performed under general anesthesia in conjunction with correcting a deviated septum (septoplasty) as well as contouring the soft palate redundancy with or without tonsillectomy. All of which are done to improve snoring and reduce obstruction in the regions of the throat and nose.

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For about three weeks, you may experience pain, crusting or nose dryness. Possible side effects using COBLATION include:

- pain
- bleeding
- swelling
- dryness
- crusting
- infection
- persistent snoring/apnea

NOTE: There is a possibility that turbinate tissue may regrow after surgery, making it necessary to undergo further turbinate reduction. Revision base of tongue COBLATION may be necessary if there is remnant base of tongue tissue still present after the 1st procedure.

What's the outlook?

The goal of COBLATION turbinoplasty is to reduce the swelling of the turbinates while still maintaining their function. In this scenario, COBLATION offers the most advanced minimally invasive treatment modality currently available for turbinate enlargement. For COBLATION base of tongue reduction the goal is to improve the collapse of the tongue during sleep and reduce snoring.

In most cases, turbinate and base of tongue reductions are successful at opening the airways and making breathing easier. By following your surgeon's pre-operative and after-care instructions, you can speed your healing and maximize your results.

For more information, please see following links below:

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceJoqG3RIos
2. https://www.brodnermd.com/cutting-edge-techniques-and-equipment/coblation/
3. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6D9gAdAJnUI
4. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGy2PFtS3tY