

30 min #AskRMG LIVE Chat Session (30 Jan 2013) Recap - Dr David Lau

January 30, 2013 at 11:43pm

Q1. What will be the lasting effect if snoring will not be cured immediately?

A1. Hi, the only lasting effect may be that your family and friends do not want to sleep in the same room. However, if the snoring is affecting your breathing and you have a condition called obstructive sleep apnoea, this is more important because it puts strain on your heart and lungs, resulting in conditions such as high blood pressure. Left untreated, it can also cause heart attack and stroke. But do not be alarmed because these effects usually build up over many years. Doing a sleep study can help make the diagnosis. Achieving an ideal weight can also help reduce both snoring and obstructive sleep apnoea.

Q2. Why is that some of people have sudden breathing difficulties when they are fine in their breathing pattern during vigorous exercise. In addition, how do you know that you have suffered periods of reduced or no airflow during the night when you feel extreme sleepiness in the day despite adequate hours of sleep? Moreover, if you have a frequent throat inflammation, does it also affect the sleepiness or even other worst implication?

A2. Hi Dao Jian, the three sets of symptoms you described may be unrelated. Some breathing difficulties during exercise could be mean that you are simply exercising too vigorously. However, you may want to get your heart and lungs checked if you are unduly breathless.

The second symptom of daytime sleepiness could indicate a condition known as obstructive sleep apnoea. You may need a sleep study to assess this.

Regarding the third symptom, throat inflammation shouldn't affect your sleep unless you have large tonsils as the tonsils can sometimes block the airway. Frequent throat inflammation can result from acid reflux which can be due to eating too late at night and it can also be caused by smoking.

Q3. My sinus has been part of me since I was young, what cause it? lack of sleep, lack of nutritions? How can I cure it?

A3. Hi Anthony, I presume you are referring to nose allergy. There are many causes. One of the most common is dust mite allergy and can be helped by reducing dust in your surroundings

especially the bedroom. Mattresses, pillows and soft furnishings (e.g. cushions and carpets) are the most common culprits. Medication such as nasal sprays can be used to control symptoms.

Q4. My cousin have sudden lost of hearing for his left ear(it just happen after waking up from sleep). He have been to all the check ups and scan at local hospital but everything seems fine and nothing helps even the doctors cannot explained what's actually the reason for the loss of hearing. What other ways can he do to checks what's the problems? Any chance of recovery?

A4. Hi Sharon, if he has lost his hearing recently (in the last few weeks), he may benefit from a course of steroid medication. I am presuming here at he has a nerve-related hearing loss. Do check that the scan done was an MRI. In addition, blood tests can be useful to look for the cause, if not already done. It is difficult to say if recovery will occur and this depends to some extent on the cause. However, he may need to be monitored for a period of time. Meanwhile, avoiding excessive salt consumption sometimes helps.

Q5. Hi Dr Lau,

I have a question. Recently I caught the flu bug and not only did I suffer from blocked nose, but I realize that I couldn't hear anything well, like I had ear plug in my ears. Why is that so?

I also experience the same thing whenever I was elevated from the ground floor to a higher space, be it in a lift or in a plane, and I have to open and close my jaw and mouth like a fish just to relieve that blocked sensation. Is there anything I can do to cure this discomfort?

Thank you Dr Lau and also Raffles Medical for opening up this forum to ask questions. :)

A5. Hi Roland, sometimes after the flu, the eustation tubes can get swollen or blocked. The eustation tubes join the back of your nose to your ears and help you equalise pressure in your ears. When they get blocked, your hearing can be affected. When the flu gets better, this should recover. However, if it doesn't or if it's a recurring problem, please get an ENT doctor to check. It may be necessary to check your nose and the eustation tube openings with a small camera. Meanwhile, opening and closing your jaws or swallowing can sometimes help to clear the ears.

Q6. Dear Dr Lau, my husband suffers from heavy snoring, his snores are so loud, that I couldn't sleep well at all. Is there anything he can do to reduce his snoring? thank you!

A6. Hi, there are many possible options. However, most importantly, he may need a sleep test to check for obstructive sleep apnoea. Depending on the results he could benefit from using a CPAP machine or surgery can sometimes help. Meanwhile, achieving an ideal weight and avoiding heavy meals and alcohol before sleeping can make a difference. Being overweight and eating excessively or drinking alcohol before sleep can aggravate snoring.

Q7. Hi Dr Lau,

Lately I've been waking up with a dry mouth to the point where I sometimes feel I'm gasping for air when I wake up. Why is this so?

Also, I have a blocked nose most of the time, is there a cure for this? Thanks.

A7. Hi Frances, the most likely cause is nasal allergy and your GP should be able to prescribe a nasal spray that may help. Failing this, do get your symptoms checked by an ENT specialist.

Q8. Dear Dr David Lau,

Recently, I have breathing difficulties. It can happen any part of the day even while sitting down or standing up. It gets worsen especially after I took my meals. I would feel that there is something block my heart and lung area.

I would only feel better if I am able to burp which I can hardly does that. In addition, I am easily full with just small quantity of food.

I am starting to worry about this. What is the cause of my breathing difficulties and what can I do to prevent it? Thanks.

A8. Hi Haimi, If your breathing is bothering you, it may be good to have a GP to access your lungs first. It maybe also be a good idea for you to do some breathing tests and possibly a chest X-ray. The other symptoms that you have described are very non specific. But, I would recommend you to have your breathing issues check with your GP.

Q9. Hi Dr Lau, Sometimes, out of nowhere, clear gooey phlegm would 'appear' in my throat & I would have the urge to spit. I'm not having flu or anything. What could be the cause? Should I be concerned only if the phlegm becomes greenish yellow?

A9. Hi Ly Mei, there are many possible reasons for this. Not drinking enough water and having a dry throat could be one reason. Sometimes getting acid reflux from the stomach can also cause

this. A third possible reason could be nose allergy or sinus inflammation. If your symptoms are only occasional, there is probably nothing to worry about. But if they are persistent, do consult your doctor or see an ENT specialist.

Q10. Hi Dr Lau,

I currently have nosebleeds that comes and goes. Sometimes when the air is dry or sometimes when the weather is very cold. I don't like being make fun of, like I have nose bleeds when I see pretty ladies, when that's not true. I am concerned about the underlying cause of this, can you shed some light on it?

A10. Hi Jasper, the lining of your nose may be a bit dry. Sometimes applying some vaseline can help. Avoid rubbing and picking which may injure the delicate nose lining. If your nose bleeds persist, do get an ENT surgeon to check.

Q11. Whenever I have a soar throat with phlegm (which usually comes with running nose), my mum told me not to eat fruits like oranges because she said it would worsen the throat irritation. However, I read from some books that citrus fruits like oranges are rich in Vitamin C & hence are actually good in curing running nose & boosting my immunity system.I find this rather contradictory. Which is true? Could I still eat oranges when I'm sick?

A11. Hi, oranges are good source of vitamin C and there are some scientific evidence suggesting that this can help us recover from colds. However, you have to eat quite a lot of oranges to get enough vitamin C to do this. It may be easier to take a vitamin tablet.

Q12. My friend sometimes encounters situations when she hears ringing (or high-pitch whining) sounds in her ear. She is puzzled why this could happen as she seldom listens to loud music via earphones/headphones and she is not working in an environment with loud noises.What is the cause(s) of her condition? How could she treat her condition? Thanks.

A12. Hi, occasional and transient ringing may be normal. However, if it is persistent and one-sided, she ought to get it check with her doctor.

Q13. Dear Dr Lau,My ears would have a ringing sound that lasts for a few seconds, then fades away. Is this normal? Or should I go for some tests? (I'm not subjecting my hearing to very loud sounds or whatsoever). Kindly advise.Thank you.

A13. Hi, if it is just occasional and transient, there may not be anything wrong. But IF it becomes persistent or only on one side, you may need some further tests including a hearing test.

Q14. Dear Dr Lau and Raffles Medical Group.

I currently have a sinus problem since childhood. I will have runny nose or just sneeze when there's either temperature changes, when I wake up in the morning, or when the room is dusty. I have tried various oral medicines, and was told nasal spray is the best medicine for sinus problems. However, I don't like sticking things up my nose and spraying liquid into it. It actually make my nose feel more itchy. Furthermore, I have also read that consistent use of nasal spray will result in reduced efficacy.

Is that true? Other than nasal spray, what other alternatives do I have to relieve and cure this. Thank you Dr Lay and Raffles Medical Group.

A14. Hi Derek, nasal sprays are actually safe to use in the long term as long as you are using a steroid nasal spray. Avoid using decongestant sprays which injure the nose lining if used for too long. There are a variety of medications which can also be used. Reducing dust in the surroundings may also help. It may be useful to do an allergy test to find out what you are allergic to.

Q15. I heard people say snoring could be potential sign of unknown health problems. Is this true? Or is it just a minor problem due to sleeping posture or tiredness? What should we do when we frequently snore? What areas of the body should we be concerned about? What should we do to help alleviate the snoring problem?

A15. Hi Chin Ming, snoring can be worse in certain positions especially lying on your back. An age-old remedy is to stitch a tennis ball into the back of your pjs which will make you sleep on your side. :) You may want to do a sleep study to rule out obstructive sleep apnoea in which your breathing becomes obstructed during snoring.

Q16. Hi Dr Lau,

Why do some of us snore and some of us don't? My partner has loud snoring and that affects my sleep throughout the night.

A16. Hi Kim, it depends a lot on the shape of your face and jaw, especially if you have a set back jaw. Some conditions that block the nose or large tonsils can also cause snoring. In addition, being overweight is another common cause.

Q17. Hi, I frequently feel that there's pressure in my ears & need to constantly 'pop out' my ears to equalize the pressure. Are there other ways to relieve the pressure in my ears? Thank you.

A17. Hi, swallowing and yawning may be more gentle ways of doing this.

Q18. Hi, shortly after sneezing when my nose feels itchy & sensitive to dust particles or pungent smells, I'd get runny nose & would need to take a nasal decongestant to relieve it. Is there any natural product to prevent or relieve this instead? Thank you.

A18. Hi, reducing dust in the environment and sometimes using a high efficiency particle air (HEPA) filter can help. Unfortunately, there are no proven natural products.

Q19. Should we or should we not dig our ears to clean out the ear wax? Understandably we may damage our inner ear but it's gets dirty (esp those with hard ear wax) if we don't clean it. How should we clean our ears properly?

A19. Hi Jacqueline, the best way to keep your ears clean is to do nothing because the ear canal skin acts as a conveyor belt that carries the wax out with it. If you dig your ears, you may injure the skin and cause infection or end up pushing the wax further inside. There is a saying that you shouldn't put anything in your ear except your elbow (that means put nothing in).

Q20. What causes vertigo and whats the cure or medication for it?

A20. Hi Melissa Ongsue, there are many causes for vertigo, but if you get a spinning sensation, the problem is probably in the inner ear. Treatment depends on the cause for this. One particular condition called benign positional vertigo can be treated with a maneuver that can sometimes settle things down on the spot. So medication are not always required.