

Do You Have the Urge to Take a Nap?

Restful sleep solutions from the Michigan Head & Neck Institute



jaw's misalignment, they discover an empathetic ally in Dr. Klein. Having survived a life-altering auto accident years ago, he is intimately familiar with pain. He relates to the sense of helplessness that comes from constant suffering. The symptoms of TMJ — aside from the constant popping or clicking of the jaw — include fatigue, headaches, dizziness, ear congestion or pain, or problems with the eyes including blurred vision, eye pain, and a sensitivity to light. Treatment of TMJ is dependent upon its nature and the severity of the condition, but it's no wonder TMJ patients feel an instant sense of emotional relief when Dr. Klein addresses their care. Patients like relaxing in the special TMJ massaging chairs during treatment,

Restful sleep is healing. It calms the nerves and helps you make better decisions. But what happens when you rarely wake feeling refreshed? Is this harmful? Are you permanently damaging your body?

Distinguished professor Richard Klein, who also serves as director of the Michigan Head & Neck Institute, has lectured in medical venues all over the world about sleep and pain — from the National University of Singapore, to the Medical College of Beijing, to the Canadian Dental Association in Montreal. He has spoken about it on CNN network news. He's a fixture in metro Detroit's medical community, regularly presenting research before colleagues. Once a practicing general dentist, Dr. Klein now selectively concentrates his practice on two medical conditions: the common — and potentially dangerous — sleep apnea, and the disorder of the jaw known as TMJ.

It concerns him when people take sleep apnea too lightly.

"If you're afflicted with sleep apnea, you may not even know it," he says. "But if your sleeping partner has it, you will recognize this potentially heart-stopping condition instantly." It's characterized by intense snoring ... long pauses between breaths. ... feverish gasps to get air ... sudden awakenings (which might occur hundreds of times a night) ... and a distinctive snort.

"While snoring alone isn't dangerous, sleep apnea is," Dr. Klein says. With sleep apnea, the tongue falls backward in the throat, cutting off all avenues for breathing. "To visualize what's happening, think of a

garden hose with water running through it," he explains. "Everything works fine until there's a crimp in the hose and the water can no longer flow through." With sleep apnea, if there are no other difficulties and the brain is functioning well, the sleeper gasps, the crimp in the airway opens, and breathing resumes — usually within a few seconds, or up to a minute or more.

But when the central nervous system is taxed, which could be caused by something as simple as a respiratory infection or as profound as a stroke or injury to the brain stem, death could occur. In fact, it's more common than you think — 200,000 Americans die from sleep apnea-related problems every year. Sleep apnea also causes memory problems, depression, and headaches, and it contributes to many other conditions like irritability and weight gain.

Short of surgery to correct sleep apnea, which doesn't always work, and a breathing mask that many find claustrophobic and uncomfortable, mild to moderate sleep apnea sufferers are finding relief in a special mouthpiece that Dr. Klein fashions for the wearer. The device realigns the jaw, secures the tongue, and keeps the throat expanded throughout the night so breathing isn't interrupted. It's custom-fitted to each individual's jaw and generally becomes comfortable to wear in a short period of time. The mouthpiece is removed after sleeping, so no one ever knows the wearer uses it. Because it's small, it's easy to transport when traveling. Most insurance plans contribute to its cost.

As for TMJ patients, who often ache from the

and many have found a mini-support group readily available to talk through problems that only another person with TMJ can truly understand.

Ironically, the economic climate in Michigan is frequently bringing TMJ to the surface. As people's lives grow more intense, many are grinding their teeth in response. That added pressure is putting additional stress on the jaw, and TMJ flares up.

Dr. Klein has treated more than 5,000 patients at the Michigan Head & Neck Institute. Although most people come to him as referrals from other doctors, patients don't need a referral to come in. If restful sleep is eluding you or if you always feel as though you're ready for a nap, you are potentially damaging your body in a way that can have permanent results. Dr. Klein looks forward to presenting you with a refreshing solution.

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