

# **THE SLEEP APNEA EXERCISES PROGRAM**



**ORAL EXERCISES  
THAT ARE PROVEN TO CURE SLEEP APNEA**

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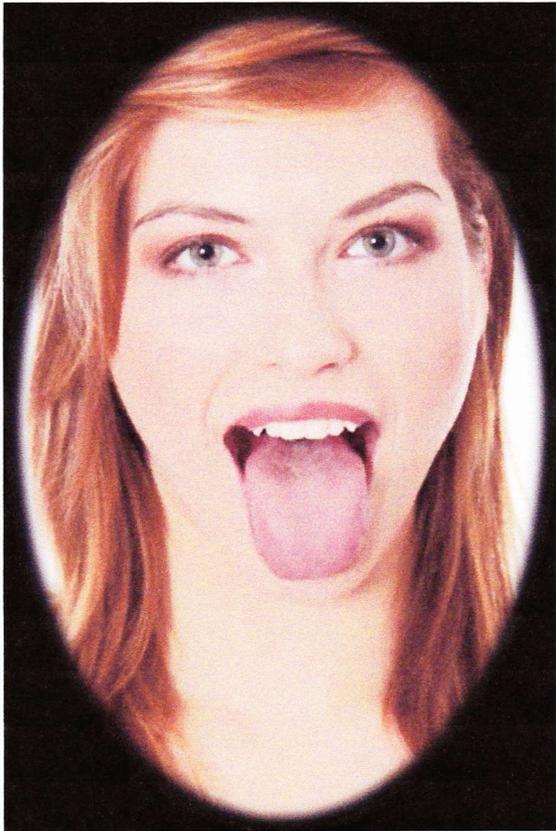
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## What is an Exercise for Obstructive Sleep Apnea?

Obstructive Sleep Apnea exercises are all connected with the face, throat, mouth, nose and neck region of the body. The general concept is to strengthen, exercise and train certain muscles, making the airway easier to access during the night while sleeping.

Many sleep apnea exercises involve the tongue receiving its own personal workout! Obstructive Sleep Apnea can be caused by a larger



tongue and the tongue collapsing and falling back down the person's throat. The exercises will increase the tongue's strength and overall physical condition and tone. You may feel slightly self-conscious initially sticking your tongue out and producing some very strange noises and sounds; if you do, then simply carry out your exercise regime when nobody else is around!

The exercises for Obstructive Sleep Apnea are referred to as "oropharyngeal exercises", meaning exercises relating to the

mouth and pharynx. The pharynx is the tube, along with its surrounding muscles, that connects the nasal passages and mouth to the esophagus. Jaw exercises are also included. These will assist with strengthening the weaker muscles and enabling them to open up when required to clear the airway.

There are blowing exercises that involve the person inhaling through their nose but exhaling from their mouth. Pronouncing your vowels

properly can even help, when combined with the tongue being in a downward position; this exercise helps both the soft palate and the tongue muscles.

So as you can see, the exercises for Obstructive Sleep Apnea are not so much about you having to become super fit, or taking out a membership with the local gym, they concentrate solely on the face and neck area. Obesity can play a part in Obstructive Sleep Apnea, especially so if there is extra flab surrounding the neck region. So attempting to maintain a balanced weight and certain level of fitness can also have a positive outcome on your sleep apnea.

Along with exercising, there are certain lifestyle and behaviour alterations that can be made and tasks to be completed on a daily basis to assist with maintaining a lower level of Obstructive Sleep Apnea. These are also covered in this guide on page \_\_\_\_.

### **Proof That Exercises for Obstructive Sleep Apnea Work**

It's easy to sit here and tell you that exercises will help your Obstructive Sleep Apnea - but where's the proof behind the statement? There have been numerous academic studies performed to test the effectiveness of Oropharyngeal exercises in the treatment of Obstructive Sleep Apnea; it's an area that many health professionals called "Speech Pathologists" are interested in.

There are two academic studies that I'd like to share with you. One was carried out in the UK and the other in Brazil.

#### **UK Study**

Location : Speech Language Clinic in the UK.

Objective : To determine whether there would be any noticeable impact via Oropharyngeal exercises in patients with moderate to severe Obstructive Sleep Apnea.

## **Specific Exercises for Specific Causes of Obstructive Sleep Apnea**

Okay so now you've hopefully ascertained what the main cause of your Obstructive Sleep Apnea is. Once you can identify the cause, you'll know which area to concentrate on more. Now although the cause might be that your tongue's oversized, this doesn't mean the only exercises you should do are tongue ones.

A speech language pathologist stated in a recent interview, "Many Obstructive Sleep Apnea sufferers single out what they believe to be the main instigator, be it a larger tongue or elongated soft palate. They think if they simply work on that one area the cause will be rectified and their apnea will vanish. Not the case I'm afraid." He continued, "An Obstructive Sleep Apnea sufferer requires all their available muscles to be strong and toned. Now I'm not saying it's not a good idea to work a bit harder on a certain area, simply don't forget the other muscles."

To summarize then-it's vital that you do an assortment of exercises. If you look at the section of exercises on pages 22-39, you could select the following routine:

- ❖ Chewing – this is a good warm-up. Great for the jaw muscles

- ❖ Going Up – good as you’re not exerting your tongue yet-but it’s being worked
- ❖ The Tiger Yell – excellent for the muscles in the back of your throat
- ❖ Reach for the Ceiling – excellent for the muscles in the front of your neck
- ❖ A Smile a Day – perfect for strengthening all your neck muscles

It’s not so much the quantity of Oropharyngeal exercises that you complete, it’s the quality. The ones you choose to include in your routine, need to be done at least daily. Ideally do them prior to bed and late morning. Before bed is perfect. This will assist with working all those muscles at the time you need them the most. You need them to be at their strongest during sleep. Weak muscles collapse, causing airway blockages. Late morning is a good time too. Your body has had chance to fully wake up before you throw an exercise routine at it!

The secret’s to discover a well-balanced routine. Pick out certain ones from the next few pages. Select 8-10 exercises, including a couple ‘cause specific’ ones. Ideally do them twice daily. Four times if you can. A good one to start with is the chewing exercise, a great warm-up provider.

THE ONES I PICKED ARE DESCRIBED  
BELOW -

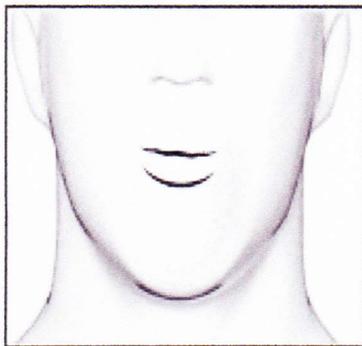
## VOWEL PRONUNCIATION - best performed in front of a mirror

### Method:

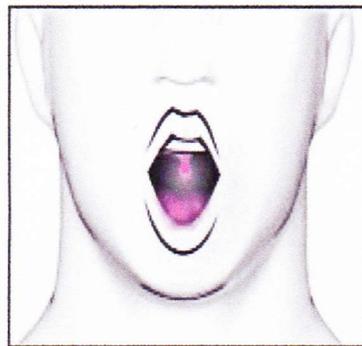
1. Standing in front of a mirror, begin pronouncing your vowels.
2. Go through all of them (A, E, I, O, U) and really exaggerate the movement of your mouth.
3. Observe yourself in the mirror and ensure you're forming the vowel sounds by stretching your mouth.
4. Slowly repeat each vowel 5 times.

**Purpose** – to stretch your mouth and throat muscles-and exercise your soft palate.

### THE "A" VOWEL



START

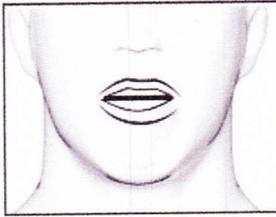


HOLD FOR 5 SECONDS

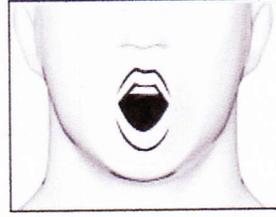
"A"



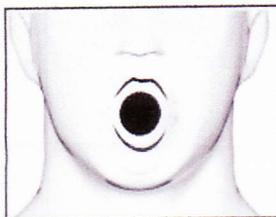
"E"



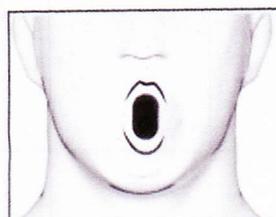
"I"



"O"



"U"



## ➤ JAW RESIST

### Method:

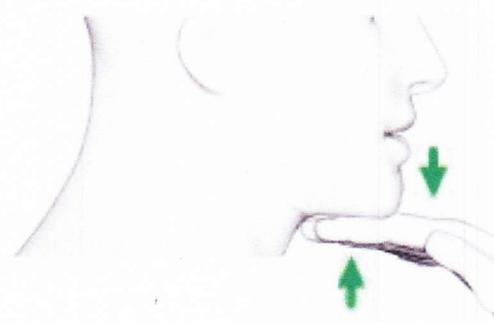
1. Place a hand underneath your chin.
2. Attempt to open your mouth. Your hand needs to push against your lower jaw. The hand's trying to stop your mouth opening.
3. Repeat 10 times.
4. Repeat 2-4 times daily.

**Purpose** – to strengthen and exercise the jaw muscles.

### JAW RESIST



PLACE HAND  
UNDER CHIN



TRY TO OPEN  
MOUTH WHILE PRESSING  
AGAINST YOUR HAND

- Please type the following web address into your internet browser to watch '**Jaw Resist**' video:
- <http://www.sleepapneaexercise.com/members-home/videos/jaw-exercises/jaw-resist>

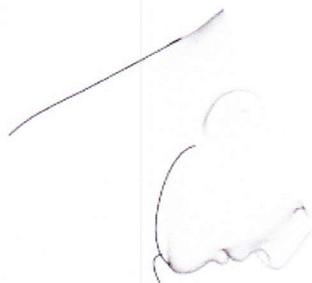
## ➤ CEILING SWALLOW

### Method:

1. Bring your head right down so your chin is resting on your chest.
2. Open your mouth wide sticking your tongue out as far as possible.
3. Gently bite down on your tongue while lifting your head up towards the ceiling.
4. When you reach the top, looking up at the ceiling and with your tongue still sticking out, you need to swallow.
5. Repeat 5 times.

**Purpose** - the swallowing action lifts the trachea and the throat muscles contract, exercise and tone.

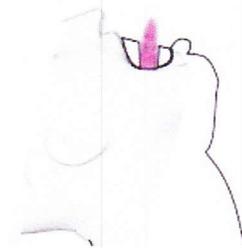
### CEILING SWALLOW



BRING CHIN  
TO CHEST



OPEN MOUTH  
AND BITE TONGUE



RAISE HEAD  
AND SWALLOW

- Please type the following web address into your internet browser to watch the 'Ceiling Swallow' video.
- <http://www.sleepapneaexercise.com/members-home/videos/throat-neck-exercises/ceiling-swallow>

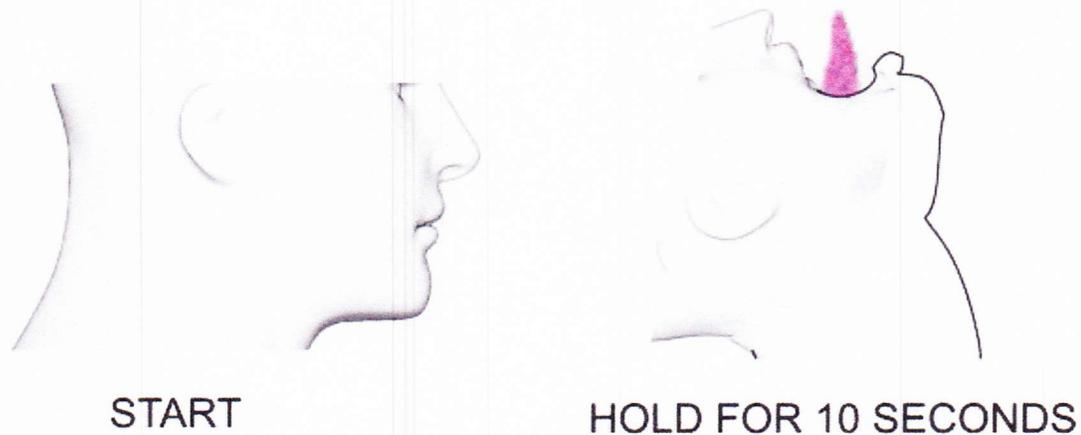
## ➤ REACH FOR THE CEILING

### Method:

1. Lift your head up as high as you can, looking at the ceiling.
2. Stick your tongue out and upward, as though you're attempting to touch the ceiling with it.
3. Hold the upward tongue position for 10 seconds and repeat 5 times.

**Purpose** - your trachea will be lifted upward, your throat muscles will contract. All the muscles in the front of your neck are exercised and stretched when the trachea is elevated. Your tongue will remain in a neutral position rather than slipping back inside your throat-and blocking your airway.

### REACH FOR THE CEILING



- Please type the following web address into your internet browser to watch '[Reach for the Ceiling](http://www.sleepapneaexercise.com/members-home/videos/throat-neck-exercises/reach-for-the-ceiling)' video:
- <http://www.sleepapneaexercise.com/members-home/videos/throat-neck-exercises/reach-for-the-ceiling>

## ➤ JAW RESIST

### Method:

1. Place a hand underneath your chin.
2. Attempt to open your mouth. Your hand needs to push against your lower jaw. The hand's trying to stop your mouth opening.
3. Repeat 10 times.
4. Repeat 2-4 times daily.

**Purpose** – to strengthen and exercise the jaw muscles.

### JAW RESIST



PLACE HAND  
UNDER CHIN



TRY TO OPEN  
MOUTH WHILE PRESSING  
AGAINST YOUR HAND

- Please type the following web address into your internet browser to watch '**Jaw Resist**' video:
- <http://www.sleepapneaexercise.com/members-home/videos/jaw-exercises/jaw-resist>

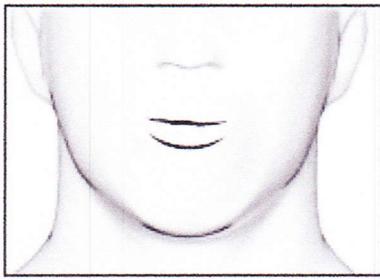
➤ **A SMILE A DAY** – best performed in front of a mirror

**Method:**

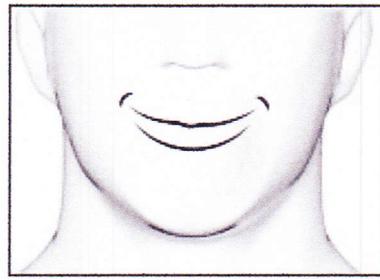
1. Quite simply, smile! Keeping your mouth shut, form an exaggerated smile.
2. Hold the smile for 5 seconds. Repeat 10 times.

**Purpose** – to tighten and strengthen your neck muscles.

### A SMILE A DAY



**START**



**HOLD FOR 5 SECONDS**

- Please type the following web address into your internet browser to watch 'A Smile a Day' video:
- <http://www.sleepapneaexercise.com/members-home/videos/throat-neck-exercises/a-smile-a-day>

➤ **TONGUE WORKOUT** – best performed in front of a mirror

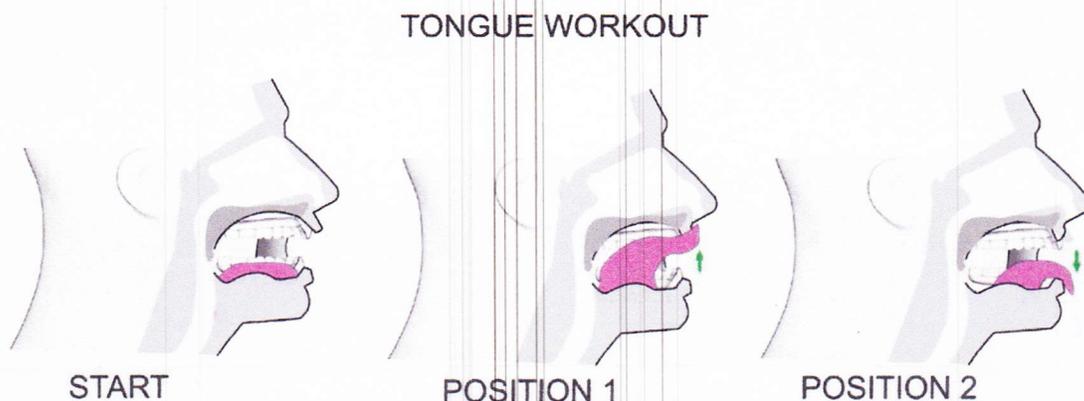
**Method:**

1. Open your mouth wide.
2. Stick your tongue out.
3. Try to touch your chin with the tip of your tongue.
4. When your tongue is at full stretch, hold it there for 5 seconds.
5. Repeat 10 times daily.

**Method:**

1. Open your mouth wide.
2. Stick your tongue out.
3. Try to touch your nose with the tip of your tongue.
4. When your tongue is at full stretch, hold it there for 5 seconds.
5. Repeat 10 times daily.

**Purpose** - to exercise and strengthen the tongue muscles, and to exercise the throat and jaw muscles.



## ➤ TONGUE PRESS

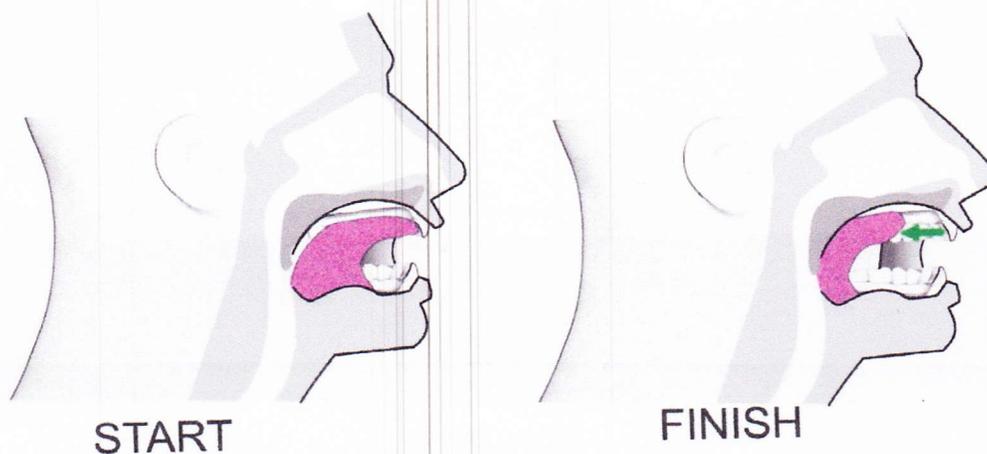
### Method:

1. Push your tongue against your hard palate (the top and front of your mouth).
2. Do this for 5 seconds.
3. Slide your tongue backward to the back of your mouth.
4. The initial third of your tongue should be against your hard palate, not just the tip.
5. Keep your jaw open throughout the exercise.
6. Refrain from biting down - keep your teeth apart.
7. Repeat this movement 10 times.
8. Repeat 4 times a day.

**Purpose** – to strengthen the genioglossus (the main muscle used for sticking your tongue out), and to increase the strength in the hyoid muscles and bone. The hyoid bone is located in the centre of the neck. It sits between the chin and thyroid cartilage.

The exercise assists by putting the hyoid bone in the correct position and keeping it there<sup>3</sup>. The hyoid bone is a free moving, u-shaped bone in the neck. The volume of the tongue should reduce too.

<sup>3</sup> In people who suffer from Obstructive Sleep Apnea the hyoid bone is sometimes in a downward position.



## EXERCISES FOR THE THROAT & NECK

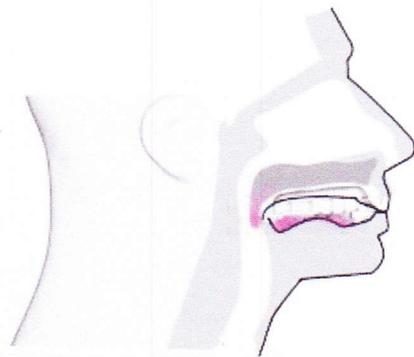
- **THE TIGER YELL** (no actual yelling required! The action of opening your mouth wide mimics a tiger going to yell/roar). Best performed in front of a mirror.

### **Method:**

1. Open your mouth as wide as possible, and stick your tongue out in a downward position. Your tongue needs to be stuck out as far as it can be.
2. The uvula, the small fleshy piece in the back of your throat, needs to be lifted upwards as you stick your tongue out.
3. The mirror is used to ensure that you're lifting the uvula up correctly. You'll soon begin to sense that you've lifted it and won't require the mirror.
4. Hold the lifted uvula for 5 seconds and repeat 10 times.

**Purpose** – to exercise and strengthen all the muscles in the back of your throat.

### THROAT/NECK THE TIGER YELL



START



HOLD FOR 5 SECONDS

## ➤ GOING UP

### Method:

1. Start with your chin resting on your chest, mouth closed.
2. Place the tip of your tongue behind your top teeth.
3. Slowly start to look at the ceiling.
4. Slide your tongue from behind your teeth to the back of your mouth.
5. Once your tongue reaches the back of your mouth lift it up, move it back to the front.
6. Hold this position for 10 seconds.
7. Bring your head back down until it's parallel with the floor.
8. Repeat 10 times.

**Purpose** – to tone and strengthen the muscles in the front of your neck and your tongue muscles.

