



wake up...

YOU'RE SNORING!

It's his problem, but it's wrecking your life. Pam Francis tackles a problem that many of us know only too well



Michael is everything in a man that I could wish for. He's 1,85m, handsome, intelligent, witty, loving, with a gorgeous

speaking voice that has the ability to reduce me to jelly.

But he snores. Loudly. Every night. So much so, that I now know how sleep deprivation has the potential to ruin your relationship, not to mention your life.

To make things worse, if there was a gold medal for light sleepers, I would have enough to make a necklace by now.

So when I met Michael seven years ago, we had a problem. After our first proper night together, I woke... actually I'll rephrase that, because I'd never actually been to sleep, partly because I was in the throes of first passion. But instead of being able to drift off to blissful slumbers in his strong, tanned arms, I had to drift off into the spare room. And then continue drifting downstairs on to the couch because, as those who are married to loud snorers will testify, the sound can penetrate walls.

I had intended to creep back to bed before he woke because I knew he'd feel bad. Instead, he found me scrunched up

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under a coat on the couch, where I had finally fallen asleep after hours of wondering how our relationship was going to get off the ground, let alone survive. Lack of sleep and I turn into

a ratty, spaced-out zombie. It was never going to work.

He was aware that he snored, his airways being restricted after twice having his nose broken. The first time in a rugby match, the second time when he failed to duck an accidental left hook from his toddler son.

There can't be many of us who haven't had to deal with occasional snoring over the years, especially once your man has downed a glass or three of red wine. But it's different if your partner is a habitual snorer.

It doesn't surprise me that a recent

report from a lung foundation has revealed that women can lose as much as three weeks' sleep a year to their husband's noisy nose. Never mind three weeks, I was in danger of losing my entire relationship.

For a few months, we tried to cope. While Michael experimented with nasal strips and sprays, I tried everything else: burying my head under a mountain of pillows; wax earplugs that moulded uncomfortably into my shell-like ears, then kept me awake with the echoed sound of my own breathing. I even tried plugging in my iPod earphones after lights out. But having to run Status Quo at full volume on a repeat loop is actually worse than the snoring, I have discovered.

We decided to tackle it head on, or even nose on. A visit to an ear, nose and throat specialist ruled out any type of surgery in Michael's case. Years before we met, he had already had an operation

Where to get help

Co-founder of an association for sleep disturbance, Marianne Davey knows everything there is to know about snoring... first hand. When she married husband Allen – a slim, fit man in his twenties – so loud was his snoring, they built an extension on to the house so that he could sleep at the other end. Thirty years later and they are able to offer expert help.

“Most snorers can be helped without medical intervention,” says Marianne. “Nasal strips are great, there are chin-up straps that keep the jaw from dropping open, and mandibular advancement devices (MADs) if you have a tongue-based snorer. If all else fails, a continuous positive airways pressure (CPAP) machine, a standard treatment for sleep apnoea, will stop the snoring.”

to realign his nose. And the alternatives, which can involve removing that wobbly bit at the back of the throat, the uvula, weren't guaranteed to work.

So the specialist suggested a mandibular advancement device (MAD), which is a mouth guard worn to treat snoring and sleep apnoea. In Michael's case, the device was moulded to fit his teeth by a dental technician. But you can now buy self-fitting devices online for as little R240. It

works by preventing the lower teeth and jaw from falling back.

So there are now three of us in this relationship. No, not the nurse, but Snorbs, as we have fondly christened this MAD device that resembles a weird set of false teeth.

Having a mouthful of plastic tends to give my lovely man a *Silence of the Lambs* appearance. And if he attempts to whisper sweet nothings, it comes out as, “Guy geely glove glue”, like a bad ventriloquist. But hell, who cares, when it stops the snoring.

Buy yours online at snorebuddy.co.za, or, for more info, visit thesnoreclinic.com

Having to run Status Quo at full volume on a repeat loop is actually worse than the snoring

‘There’s nothing feminine or sexy about snoring’

Writer Diana Appleyard, 50, lives with her husband Ross, 50, who runs a holiday cottage and B&B



It's such an embarrassing ailment, right up there with bunions and haemorrhoids. There's nothing feminine or sexy about snoring, is

there? It's rather hard to be alluring when you know that the moment you drop off, the warhog snorting begins.

Most early mornings, at about 2am, I am aroused from a deep slumber by the sound of Ross hurling off the duvet and thumping his heels on to the bedroom floor. “Right, that's it!” he cries. “I cannot stand it any longer. I'm sleeping in the spare room.” The door bangs and all is silent.

At first I'm annoyed and upset by the abruptness of his tone, but then I acknowledge that my snoring is pushing the limits of his endurance. He has to be up early every morning to cook breakfast for our guests, and lately my snoring has become so loud I even wake myself up.

My problem is sinusitis, caused by nose polyps blocking my nasal passage.

I've tried steroid nasal spray and endless anti-snoring pills and throat sprays, but nothing seems to prevent the fact that the moment I fall into a deep sleep, my head tilts back and my mouth closes – and the wretched snoring begins.

While many see snoring as something of a joke, it can affect a relationship. Ross now spends more nights in the spare room than he does in the marital bed. It also makes him angry with me – he knows that I can't help it, but a tiny part of his brain thinks I'm doing it on purpose. No matter how happily we go to bed, tempers by three in the morning are strained, and that ill will inevitably spills over into our conscious hours.

So I'm taking drastic action. I'm checking into a hospital to have my polyps examined and quite possibly removed by an ENT. This will not only allow me to regain my sense of taste and smell, but also, hopefully, wave my snoring goodbye and usher in years of silent sleep in the arms of my long-suffering husband.

WHO SNORES MOST AND WHY

- ✦ Slightly more than twice as many men as women snore, and more than half of all snorers are over 50.
- ✦ Snoring is more likely in anyone overweight – specifically in men, a collar size of over 42cm means they may not have the muscle tone to keep airways open to allow normal breathing. Drinking, taking sleeping tablets, smoking, sleeping on your back and allergies all make snoring more likely.
- ✦ Sleep apnoea is a period of ‘stopping breathing’, when lack of muscle tone causes the airways to

collapse. It's significant if it lasts more than 10 seconds and happens more than 10 times a night. The brain automatically wakes you up, often with a loud snore, to breathe again. Excessive daytime sleepiness is common in sufferers, but it's usually partners who notice the symptoms.

- ✦ Losing weight and not drinking are key to preventing snoring, and appliances, such as mandibular advancement devices (MADs) can be used to hold the lower jaw and tongue forward, making more space to breathe. w&h