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Mouth Taping Is All Over TikTok, but Sleep Experts Warn It’s Not for Everyone

A new study has found that the mouth taping trend could be dangerous for those with sleep apnea, and sleep experts warn it’s not for everyone.



Photo: Stocksy/Yaroslav Danylchenko

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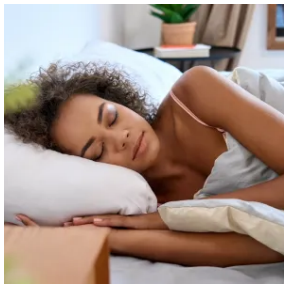
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TikTok wellness trends typically come and go fast, but mouth taping? This one seems here to stay. The practice involves putting a piece of medical-grade tape over your mouth before bed to

avoid mouth breathing. But doctors are pushing back on its purported benefits—especially if you have an underlying condition like sleep apnea.

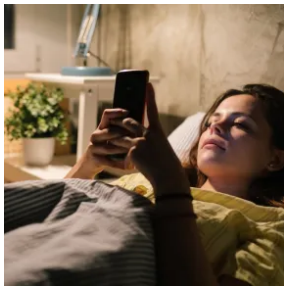
Many of the TikTok videos promoting mouth taping claim it can improve your respiratory and oral health and even reduce the risk of obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), a serious condition marked by abnormal breathing during sleep. But doctors are warning that this practice isn't safe if you're naturally prone to mouth breathing while sleeping due to things like nasal congestion, undiagnosed OSA, airway obstruction, or other inflammatory conditions.

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These concerns were highlighted in a recent study in *JAMA Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery*[1]. The nonrandomized clinical trial followed 54 people with OSA during a drug-induced sleep endoscopy. Researchers evaluated their airflow when their mouth was open versus closed. In 12 of the 54 participants, airflow from inhalation was significantly decreased with a closed mouth. They also found an association between velopharyngeal obstruction (i.e., weakened tissue between the nasal and oral cavities) and decreased airflow when the mouth was closed.

Beyond this finding, the studies around the benefits of mouth taping at night are limited—especially in relation to OSA. Here's what you need to know about your personal risk with mouth taping, if you're considering trying the trend.

Is mouth taping dangerous?

If you're someone who has an easy time breathing through your nose while lying down, and you don't have any symptoms of obstructive sleep apnea (loud snoring, waking up gasping or choking, morning headaches, daytime sleepiness), then you may be in the clear to try mouth taping. Still, it's best to get your sinuses checked by your doctor first, just to make sure you don't have any undiagnosed obstructions, a deviated septum, or even mild OSA, which is associated with an increased risk of lower oxygen levels and developing conditions like high blood pressure, heart rhythm problems, and heart disease, per the Mayo Clinic.

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Worth noting: One small 2015 study did find that open-mouth sleepers with mild sleep apnea may benefit from using porous tape (i.e., tape with holes) over their mouths while sleeping, to lessen the intensity and frequency of snoring and apneas. But more research needs to be done to fully determine whether mouth tape is entirely effective.

If given the "all clear" from your doc, mouth taping may just help you breathe through your nose, which some studies have shown can help prevent that annoying dry-mouth feeling when you wake up, according to Henry Ford Health. But if you're doing it to get a snatched jawline or reduced face wrinkles? The jury's still out on whether this works.

That said, if you're someone who snores or has trouble breathing through your nose once your head hits the pillow (whether from allergies, congestion, a deviated septum, or other health issues), talk to your doctor before trying any sort of trend like mouth taping. Your doctor or a sleep specialist can evaluate you for things like OSA or other sleep concerns and make sure

you're properly treated with clinically-backed options—like mouth guards, hypoglossal nerve stimulators, or even minor procedures to open your airways, per the study.

Ultimately, mouth taping is not for everyone, despite what TikTok touts. If you have concerns about breathing issues during sleep, the best thing to do is see a medical professional.

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