Wake up with morning throat aches [1]

Dear Alice,

Almost every morning, for a couple of years now, I've woken up with a throat ache and dry mouth, it lasts only a couple of hours but is there any way to prevent it?

? Sore throat

Answer

Dear Sore Throat,

Talk about a rude awakening! There are a number of possibilities behind the reason you're consistently waking up with a sore throat in the morning, including:

- Sleeping with an open mouth
- Snoring
- Sleep apnea [2]
- Acid reflux

How would you determine if you're dealing with any of these issues? To begin, if someone sleeps with you during the night, ask them if you snore or sleep with your mouth open. If not, you might want to ask a friend or roommate to check in on you while you're asleep. Sore throats associated with snoring or sleeping with an open mouth may benefit from:

- Using a humidifier in your bedroom
- Gargling with warm salt water (¼ teaspoon of salt to ½ cup of water)
- Increasing your liquid intake throughout the day
- Trying the popular home remedy of warm (caffeine-free) tea with honey

If none of these measures work for you, it's probably best to make an appointment with your health care provider. It's possible that you might be suffering from sleep apnea or acid reflux. If you have sleep apnea, you might not be aware of it. Do you wake up in the middle of the night with a snort or feeling as if you're choking? Do you feel overly tired during the day? Is your sore throat in the morning accompanied by a headache? Sleep apnea causes people to wake up numerous times throughout the night; one sign that you may be afflicted is if you are sleepy in the morning and throughout your day. Once again, a friend or loved one can tell you if your sleep is interrupted on a consistent basis. If there is even the slightest chance that you have sleep apnea you may want to consult a sleep specialist, as this condition can
decrease one's quality of life, and may lead to more severe health consequences.

Acid reflux [3] is an issue that can be easily overlooked, as some people only exhibit symptoms when they sleep. Those suffering from acid reflux experience the regurgitation of stomach acids into the back of their throat. A first line of defense against stomach acid in your throat would be to avoid eating too close to bedtime and to limit or avoid smoking, alcohol use and caffeine intake. If you are able, you might also try to tilt your bed frame so that its head is elevated four to six inches higher than its foot to keep the acid in its place when you're lying down.

Even if any of these options brings you relief, they may only be a temporary fix. A health care provider may be able to help clear up your condition for good and put you on the path to many pain-free mornings to come.

Alice!
Category: General Health [4]
Aches, Pains & Other Ailments [5]
Sleep [6]

Related questions

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Resources

Medical Services (Morningside) [10]
Medical Services (CUMC) [11]

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