

Breathe well little one

Avoid breathing disorders in children for lifelong health

On the current bestseller list is a riveting book, *Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art*, by James Nestor, a renowned investigative journalist. Nestor journals an amazing personal experience in a research lab, where he plugs his nostrils with silicone spheres and duct tape to force 24/7 mouth breathing. If that sounds strange it's because breathing through the mouth full time is the exact OPPOSITE of what we are supposed to do! Unfortunately, about half of us are habitual mouth breathers, and it wrecks all kinds of havoc with our health.

Breath is one guy's story, and a memorable one at that. But behind the scenes there is a ton of validated research supporting the concept that we should always be breathing through our noses when resting, with our lips sealed, and our teeth apart!

You see, we are born as obligate nose breathers. That means from the first day of life, we literally can't eat (i.e. suck from a breast) if we can't breathe well through our nose. In other words, a

newborn who cannot breathe through their nose is literally forced to choose between eating and breathing. They will suffer from a failure to thrive.

Over time, mouth breathers are likely to develop facial distortion. The tongue stays low and lazy and the facial muscles gain the power to narrow the face—as well as the dental arches. This usually instigates crowded teeth, a high-vaulted palate, a deviated septum of the nose, and sleep/breathing disorders such as Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA).

In today's adult population 26% have acquired OSA where one literally stops breathing in their sleep, several times an hour. The body must accommodate repeated periods of time without oxygen. Turns out, a lack of oxygen makes you sick in countless ways.

Having seen this life-threatening epidemic mushroom the past few decades, we have come to realize that we must get better at recognizing kids with airway problems and intervening earlier.

In that light, I have learned that lip-tie and tongue-tie are frequently the root

cause of an escalating airway problem in childhood and releasing these often feels like a miracle. When a newborn can suddenly experience optimal breast feeding, the function serves as strength-training for the tongue. When a strong tongue takes its rightful place against the whole palate, the pumping and swallowing functions help to grow a wide, forward developed mouth—with an open breathing tube for successful nasal breathing!

Optimal breast-feeding, nasal breathing and great quality sleep are all foundational for a lifetime of health. Keep in mind that our current healthcare system is built and rewarded by sick care, not prevention and well care. It's time we do our part to turn that around.



*Dr. Susan Maples is a dentist in Holt. She is also a speaker, health educator and author of *Blabbermouth*. Learn more at drsusanmaples.com or call (517) 694.0353.*



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