

**Recommended:**  
Hey, old ladies --  
come stand next to  
me

**Recommended:**  
Stop the  
waterworks, ladies.  
Crying chicks aren't  
sexy

**Recommended:**  
Planning a 'polar  
bear plunge'? How  
your body reacts

**Recommended:** Brr!  
Disorder makes  
some super  
sensitive to cold

advertisement



Strange news on the wonderfully weird human body and the medical curiosities that make you go huh, eww or ouch! Got a delightfully disturbing idea? E-mail The Body Odd. You can also check us out on Facebook and Twitter.

↓ About this blog ↓ Archives

 Receive e-mail updates

 Subscribe to RSS

 Like 5K

Recent posts

**10**  
hours  
ago

## 'Mouth-breathing' gross, harmful to your health

**Melissa Dahl writes:** Who knows when "mouth-breather" became an insult synonymous with "[dork](#)" or "[dweeb](#)," like a character from "Napoleon Dynamite." But listen to the heavy breathers that are likely surrounding you: It's January, when more of us are prone to the sniffles, which means more of us have stuffy noses, which means -- we've entered the month of the mouth-breather.



Twentieth Century Fox

But the term isn't just a barb that tracksuited TV villain Sue Sylvester loves to hurl like a slushie at the "Glee" kids; experts say that breathing while slack-jawed can actually lead to some surprisingly unpleasant health problems. If you're fighting a cold right now, you know your inability to suck any air through your congested nostrils can cause [dry mouth](#), [dragon breath](#) and lack of sleep, for starters. You'll be fine when you kick the crud; the big problems start when you've become a chronic mouth-breather -- children and adults with allergies, for example.

As Dr. Yosh Jefferson, a New Jersey functional orthodontist, explains, "Mouth-breathing also irritates the tonsils and adenoids, so you have a double whammy where the sinuses are congested, which causes further blockage of the upper airway." Now you *really* can't breathe out of that nose. What's more, when you take in oxygen through your nose, it passes over the mucous membrane and into the sinuses, which produces nitric oxide, which your body needs for all the smooth muscles, like your heart and your blood vessels. So when you're not breathing through your nose, your blood actually isn't getting all the oxygen it needs to function properly.

Jefferson believes breathing though the mouth is often an overlooked root cause of many health and behavioral problems, particularly in school-age kids. ("Just think of the child," he says. "How do you think they're doing in school? These kids are tired, they're irritable, they can't concentrate in school. And a lot of these kids (may be) diagnosed with ADD and hyperactivity.")

 Show tools

But here's the absolute weirdest thing that mouth-breathing can cause: It can actually change the shape of kids' faces, according to a report Jefferson published last year in the [journal General Dentistry](#). "Severe mouth breathers develop what they call long face syndrome -- long, narrow faces, very unattractive facial features. Also if their tonsils are swollen, they sometimes position their jaw in weird ways in order to get more oxygen into their bodies. It can happen in adults as well ... but it's more prominent in children," Jefferson says. "People think they grew to this face because of genetics -- it's not, it's because they're mouth-breathers." It's reversible in children if it's caught early -- an orthodontist might use a device to expand the jaw, which will widen the mouth and open the sinuses, helping the child breathe through the nose again. (This can be done in adults, too, but it's more difficult.)

"It's best to treat them early," Jefferson says. "It drives me crazy that there are so many kids who are mouth breathers and no one is doing anything about it."

Get updates from The Body Odd on [Twitter](#) and on [Facebook](#), and follow [Melissa Dahl @melissadah](#).

26 comments below

### Share

4

Recommend

188 recommendations. [Sign Up](#) to see what your friends recommend.

## Discuss this article

### *jane-2056095*

This looks to me like a great way for this guy (whom I'm sure himself has a wonderfully broad face) to make big bucks putting children through grueling orthodontic "treatments." His shining example is of a mouth-breathing young boy who had his tonsils and adenoids removed, then was sent on to this guy for orthodontia and got two full years of "palatal expansion." The author touts the boy's improved test scores midway through the process as if it could only be due to orthodontia, not the surgery, but there's not a shred of evidence for that. In the meantime, the kid has gone from having a charming, even smile to being visibly deformed, because he was "overexpanded" - but don't worry, that can be fixed during Phase 2! I can only imagine what agony the poor child is enduring, and how much money his parents are shelling out, to ensure that he doesn't end up with (oh, the horror) a "long narrow face."

#1 - Tue Jan 11, 2011 3:03 PM EST

REPLY  2 votes

### **George A. Marquart**

It is amazing how much ignorance there still is in the medical profession. Mouth breezing in children is one of the prime indicators of the fact that there is some form of obstruction in their nasal passages. In all likelihood they suffer from sleep apnea as a result.

#2 - Tue Jan 11, 2011 3:15 PM EST

REPLY  3 votes

### **Lisa-1530342**

George, isn't that what the whole article was trying to say?



#2.1 - Tue Jan 11, 2011 3:27 PM EST

**FeistyAlaskan**

I have two daughters who were mouth breathers. Both of them had to have their tonsils and adenoids removed. Once the surgeon got into my oldest daughter's throat he found out that she had an enormous puss pocket that could have killed her. My youngest daughter spent 3 days in the hospital because her tonsils swelled shut. Both of them had sleep apnea and snored horribly. It's very frightening to lay there at night listening to your child breathe and then all of a sudden stop....

My oldest daughter had to go through expansion and braces. She has a beautiful smile! In order to correct her jaw (which deformed over her many years of mouth breathing), they want to break it and re-set it. I said no. She can make that decision when she's an adult.

The moral of my story is that taking the steps to correct a problem that someone may overlook meant the world to my daughters.

#2.2 - Tue Jan 11, 2011 3:44 PM EST

3 votes

REPLY

**eddie s-802886** Comment collapsed by the community

advertisement

 <p><b>Why Snoring Can Kill</b></p>	 <p><b>Oregon Job Scam?</b></p>	
 <p><b>Muscle Building Miracle</b></p>	 <p><b>Strange Fruit Burns Fat</b></p>	
<p><b>Portland: Work At Home Jobs (Reviewed)</b> We investigated work at home jobs and what we found may shock... <a href="#">News1Reports.com</a></p>		<p><b>Portland: At Home Mom Makes \$2000/wk</b> We Investigate Local Mom Earning \$7,000/mo And Show You How... <a href="#">OnlineCareerJournal.com...</a></p>

**Buco**

What does being liberal have anything to do with this?

#4 - Tue Jan 11, 2011 4:44 PM EST

REPLY 1 vote

**verno**

Nothing, Eddie just wanted to rant on liberals and show his ignorance.

#4.1 - Tue Jan 11, 2011 5:11 PM EST

REPLY

**S-480203**

Deleted



#5 - Tue Jan 11, 2011 4:49 PM EST

REPLY **Suzeiki**

I have always breathed through my mouth. I wondered if it was because my tonsils and adenoids were removed when I was 6. Back in the 1950's they removed these organs whether you needed it or not. I have had a lot of trouble with my teeth during my life. Interesting about the heart needing nitric oxide. BTW, how in the world did politics get into this discussion?

#6 - Tue Jan 11, 2011 4:55 PM EST

REPLY  1 vote**scottyusa**

I never breath through my mouth. When I get all stuffed up, I have developed a way to breath through my buttohole. Send me a check for \$10.00 and I will share the secret. We have filters in our noses that we bypass when breathing through the mouth. I believe most people breath through their mouths when talking so if you keep your mouth shut that will help tremendously as well and maybe even keep you out of trouble.

#7 - Tue Jan 11, 2011 4:56 PM EST

REPLY  4 votes***That's What's Up*** Deleted**smtwnguy**

Scottyusa- I'm sitting here doubled over from laughter at your post. You made my day!!!Thanks

#7.1 - Tue Jan 11, 2011 11:48 PM EST

REPLY **John-2412130**

The Internet is a never-ending well of ways for me to waste my time.

#8 - Tue Jan 11, 2011 6:15 PM EST

REPLY  1 vote**bugada**

yep yep

#8.1 - Tue Jan 11, 2011 6:37 PM EST

REPLY **BubbaFoo**

test

#9 - Tue Jan 11, 2011 6:38 PM EST

REPLY  1 vote**Ervin-1693529**

Go see your Doctor. You got real trouble from breathing through your rear end.

#10 - Tue Jan 11, 2011 7:00 PM EST

REPLY **mathuin**

This really is no joke. If your kid has trouble breathing, get him/her to an allergy specialist early. It may make a remarkable difference in their life.

#11 - Tue Jan 11, 2011 7:46 PM EST

REPLY 



Browse

featured, health, melissa-dahl, diane-mapes, curious-condition, better-living-through-science, halloween, odd-news, brian-alexander, jonel-aleccia, linda-dahlstrom, linda-carroll, your-new-worst-nightmare, neurology, bill-briggs, julia-sommerfeld, pregnancy, curious-conditions, thanksgiving, shopping, capgras-delusion, ew, diet, say-what, diastema, whod-a-thunk, pets, just-plain-wrong, no-duh, strange-conditions, really, crying-not-sexy, memory, marilu-henner, amazing-stories, weird-news, see-ya-2010, new-years, kristin-kalning, polar-bear-plunge, totally-crazy, rubber-man-syndrome, stacy-lipson, good-grades, feet, ugg-boots, funky-feet, fashion-hazard

advertisement

Also

		
		
<p><b>Portland: Work At Home Jobs (Reviewed)</b> We investigated work at home jobs and what we found may shock... <a href="#">News1Reports.com</a></p>		<p><b>Portland: At Home Mom Makes \$2000/wk</b> We Investigate Local Mom Earning \$7,000/mo And Show You How... <a href="#">OnlineCareerJournal.com...</a></p>



**Melissa Dahl** is a health writer and editor at msnbc.com.

**Melissa Dahl Blogroll**

- [The Daily What](#)
- [Boing Boing](#)
- [FitSugar](#)
- [The Beauty Brains](#)

[Follow on Twitter](#)

**Archives**

- 2011 January (7)
- 2010
- 2009
- 2008

**Most comments**

Stop the waterworks, ladies. Crying chicks aren't sexy (190)

**Other blogs**

- [Cosmic Log](#)
- [Red Tape Chronicles](#)
- [Photoblog](#)
- [Technolog](#)
- [Daryl Cagle's Cartoon Blog](#)
- [Open Channel](#)
- [InGame](#)



**top stories**

- [New threat note found in Tucson shooting](#)
- [Ariz. suspect's parents: 'Don't know why this happened'](#)
- [Jackson doctor ordered to stand trial](#)
- [20,000 homes likely to flood in Aussie city](#)
- [2 storms head for Northeast; South on ice](#)
- [Doctor: Rep. Giffords breathing on her own](#)
- [Law passed to ban picketing at Tucson funerals](#)
- [Despite doughnuts, everyone wins on 'Loser'](#)
- [Verizon finally gets an iPhone](#)
- [Tiny breaks from sitting can whittle a tiny waist](#)



