

Invisible Knife Stops Snorer

Too thick. Carefully the surplus tissue of the soft palate is ablated with the radiofrequency probe (left fig.). Many times obesity is the reason for a soft palate that is too thick and for snoring. The costs (about 2500 DM, \$1200) are not covered by the statutory health insurances.



Radiofrequency – gentle, without bloodshedding and takes only 10 minutes

From RENA BEEG

In some nights Brigitte Pritsching (57) lies quiet as a mouse in her bed and listens unbelievably into the night: She hears nothing, absolutely nothing – only the regular, quiet breathing of her husband. For the woman from Berlin, this is still like a miracle. For many years her husband Horst (61) snored so loud and penetrating that Brigitte Pritsching's only choice was to put thick plugs into her ears – or, when even that did not help any longer – to flee with the quilt in her hand onto the couch in the living room.



Expert: Dr. Antoine Aschmann has successfully treated over 500 snorers with Radiofrequency.

These times are over now. For few days now Horst Pritsching has been sleeping peacefully like a baby.

This success is owed to a new surgery method called radiofrequency. With this method using gentle, but high frequency radiowaves, the surplus tissue in the soft palate, which is responsible for the snoring sound, is ablated. Since the wound is sealed at the same moment by the invisible knife, there is virtually no bleeding.

ENT-specialist Dr. Antoine Aschmann, head of the private clinic Medica Mülheim: "The surgery is

carried out under light sleep anaesthesia and takes only ten minutes. As early as one hour later the patient can leave the clinic."

The advantage in comparison to the conventional radiofrequency-therapy (somnoplasty), which was as a precursor used already successfully against snoring: radiofrequency works without heat, the wound heals better, the patient can drink a cup of coffee or tea within an hour after the surgery. Furthermore the procedure does not have to be repeated such as the case sometimes in somnoplasty.

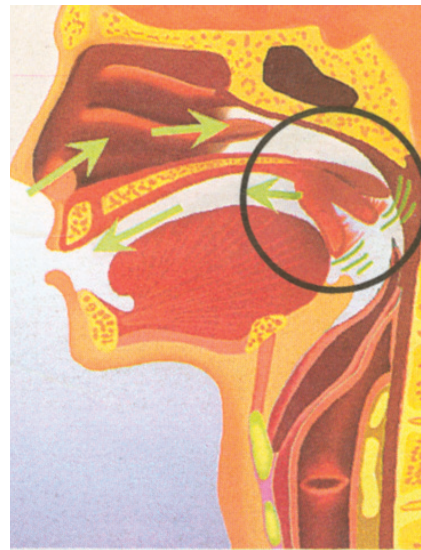
In comparison to the widely used laser technique, the radiofrequency is again advantageous. There are no painful swellings, as the tissue is cut very gently – and not as in laser technique, carbonated.

Before the invisible knife is used, the patient should spend one night in a sleeping lab, to exclude a so-called sleep apnea. Pathological snorers, whose breathing regularly stops for a few seconds during their sleep, cannot be helped with radiofrequency. Expert Aschmann: "Only in some medium to severe cases we could have some success."

The new technique is suitable for the so-called primary snorers, whose soft palates are too thick or long – which is the case in about 90 percent of the 20 million German snorers. Statistics shows that every second man beyond 50 years snores – and women after menopause snore loudly as well (because of the increase of the male hormones). Most common reason for the disturbance of peace at night: consumption of alcohol and smoking. And, most of all, obesity. Dr. Frank Metternich, ENT-senior physician at the medical school clinic in Hamburg-Eppendorf: "People who are overweight do not only have thick bellies, they have much fat tissue in the throat as well. The resulting constriction in the area of the palate is the reason for snoring."

A diet can be the first step to nightly peace. But doing without alcohol must not be underestimated. Dr. Metternich's rule of thumb: "Every bottle of beer before going to sleep is the reason for one hour of snoring."

Horst Pritsching got rid of these sorrows, he slumbers quietly – whether with or without beer as a nightcap. One thing he finds especially wonderful: "To have such a thankful wife after such a small operation, that did not happen to me in 38 years of marriage..."



The operation: The left figure shows how snoring develops: If the soft palate is too thick the breathed air (green arrows) has to be pressed through the throat. The uvula begins to flutter – snoring can be heard. On the figure above (1) can be seen,



how excess tissue can narrow the throat. The marked area (2) marks the fat tissue that has to be removed. With the radiofrequency probe (small picture) the tissue is removed, the area of the palate is free again (3). (more information under www.schnarch-operation.de)



Always quiet. Horst Pritsching (left) has travelled from Berlin to Muehlheim to be operated with the radiofrequency technique. Only a few ENT-physicians offer this method at the moment. His wife Brigitte is happy about the success of the surgery – until now she could stand her sleeping husband only with earplugs....