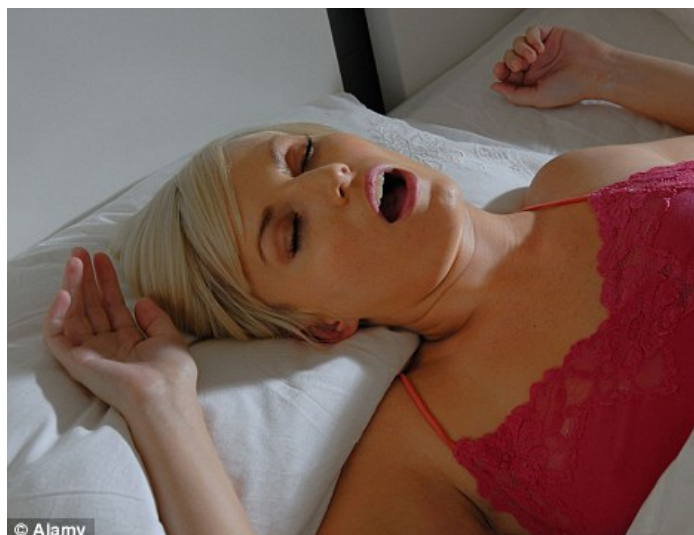


The survey, by ResMed, which manufactures sleep apnoea equipment, estimates 378,000 women in the UK suffer from undiagnosed sleep apnoea.



Despite all the women in the survey declaring their everyday lives to be affected by their snoring, none said they would visit their GP to discuss the problem. Other new research has found that women in particular are more likely to put off seeking help because they are so embarrassed about their condition.

Furthermore, most did not see snoring as a health problem. In Daisy's case, it wasn't sleep apnoea but enlarged turbinates — a condition that affects many thousands of Britons without them realising it. These are the bits of bone covered by soft tissue just inside the nose where the nostril flares out; they help to filter and warm air in the nose, and to trap dirt and dust particles.

Most of the time we're not aware of them, but when they become enlarged it can make breathing through the nose almost impossible and triggers snoring, says Myles Black, consultant head, neck and thyroid surgeon at East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust and The Private Clinic in London.

'Turbinates may become enlarged due to an allergy (which causes inflammation of the tissue around the bone making it 'fat') or irritation such as that from cigarette toxins.'

Daisy doesn't know what caused her condition, but found that as well as snoring it was more difficult to breathe during exercise.

She confesses that for her, snoring had mainly been an inconvenience — she had no idea it could potentially affect her health in the future.

'I had known for a few years I had enlarged turbinates after my GP referred me to an ear, nose and throat specialist, but I just hadn't got around to doing anything about it.'

Daisy saw Mr Black, who lasered away part of the turbinate tissue to reduce blockages in her nose. 'I had the surgery under local anaesthetic,' she says. 'It took less than half an hour, I didn't need any time off work and I noticed the results straight away. 'It was quite painful, but I was given more anaesthetic to deal with that. Six weeks on, I barely snore and I am breathing through my nose much easier.

'I'm definitely sleeping better and Chris is obviously very pleased, too.

'I just wish I had got treatment earlier.

'I didn't know snoring was something that could have health implications long-term; it's not something you think about when you are in your 20s.'