

Me and my operation: A mouth implant put my snoring to bed - and saved my marriage!

By [ANNA HODGEKISS](#)

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A third of Britons over 40 snore regularly. Treatments include wearing a mouth guard and laser surgery, but a new 25-minute procedure has cured Douglas Buttery, 66, a former police officer from Weston-super-Mare, as he tells ANNA HODGEKISS . . .



Common problem: Douglas' snoring was caused by part of the roof of his mouth being too floppy (posed by model)

My snoring has driven my wife Daphne mad over the years. I've always had a problem, but it got really bad in my mid-20s after we married — from then, it just got worse and worse. And it was always louder after a couple of drinks.

It got to the point where Daphne couldn't sleep because of my snoring and I couldn't sleep because she kept jabbing me in the ribs. The only time we ever got a decent night's rest was when I worked shifts and we slept at different times.

I tried no end of remedies from the chemist — a throat spray, strips to keep my nostrils open and nose plugs — but nothing worked. I even got tested for sleep apnoea (where the airways collapse temporarily, stopping the air passing through and causing snoring), but was told I didn't have it. Then a few years ago we went on a cruise to the Mediterranean.

Daphne didn't get any sleep and we argued all the time, as she was so tired. Back home, the only option was to move into the spare room. We've been married for 40 years and didn't want to sleep apart, but there was no choice. Even that didn't help, as she could still hear me through the walls!

In the end, my GP referred me to an ear, nose and throat consultant, but it took two years to get an appointment.

When I eventually saw Mr Tierney in September 2009, he said my snoring was caused by my soft palate — part of the roof of my mouth — being too floppy. The noise I made was caused by it vibrating. Apparently, this happens to a lot of people as they get older.

The good news was that I'd be suitable for surgery, as nothing else had worked. The bad news was the NHS had just stopped funding treatments for snoring.

But there were private treatments on offer, such as the new Pillar Procedure. This involved putting implants into my soft palate to stiffen it and reduce the amount it could vibrate. Putting something into the body makes the tissue around it scar and become thicker.

He said he'd also cut off my uvula — the dangly bit at the back of the throat — as this had become swollen from years of snoring and was vibrating a lot, making the noise worse.

The op is usually done under a local anaesthetic, but as I was having my uvula cut off too I had to have a general anaesthetic.

I was told the op would cost about £2,500 (it's cheaper with a local anaesthetic). It was a lot of money, but I could see how much the snoring was affecting my marriage, so decided to go for it.

I had the op in November 2009. When I woke up my throat was quite sore, but I was given - painkillers and managed to eat the three-course lunch provided.

The op was in the morning and I was home by 5.30pm. If I'd had it under local anaesthetic, I would have been in and out in 25 minutes.

I couldn't sleep lying down for the first two weeks, as I couldn't breathe properly, and it took two months for everything to settle. But the results were instant: I haven't snored since the op.

Daphne says the noise I make has gone from ten to zero — I don't think she can quite believe it! Now, we're sleeping in the same bedroom and have even booked a cruise to the - Mediterranean this summer.