

Positional Therapy Devices

Positional Therapy Devices for Sleep Apnea and Snoring

If you have sleep apnea or snoring that is worse when sleeping on your back, positional therapy can help. This means using a device to help you sleep on your side. Below are the most common devices, listed from most effective to least effective, based on medical research.^{[1][2][3][4][5][6][7][8][9]}

Device Name & Visual	How It Works	Effectiveness	Comfort & Adherence
<p>Vibrotactile Devices (NightBalance, Sleep Position Trainer)</p> 	<p>Worn around the chest or back, these devices gently vibrate when you roll onto your back, prompting you to return to your side.</p>	<p>Most effective for reducing apnea events and time spent on the back. Comparable to CPAP in selected patients with positional OSA.</p>	<p>High comfort and better long-term use than older methods. Most patients find them easy to use and prefer them over other devices.</p>
<p>Tennis Ball Technique (TBT)</p> 	<p>A tennis ball is sewn or strapped to the back of your pajamas to make sleeping on your back uncomfortable.</p>	<p>Effective at first, but less so than vibrotactile devices.</p>	<p>Many people stop using it due to discomfort or poor sleep quality.</p>

Positioning Pillows (Posiform®)



Specially shaped pillows keep you on your side during sleep.

Can reduce time spent on your back and improve sleep quality, but less effective than electronic devices.

Generally comfortable, but may not work for everyone.

Backpacks or Semi-Rigid Backpacks



A small backpack or foam block is worn to prevent rolling onto your back.

Can help reduce time on your back, but less effective and less comfortable than other options.

Many people find them bulky or uncomfortable and stop using them.

Key Points:

- Vibrotactile devices (like NightBalance and Sleep Position Trainer) are the most effective and comfortable for most people with positional OSA.[2][3][4][5][6][7][8]
- Simpler methods like the tennis ball technique or special pillows can help, but are less effective and often less comfortable.[1][3][9]
- All devices work best for people whose sleep apnea or snoring is much worse when sleeping on their back.
- Discuss with your healthcare provider which device is best for your needs.

What to Expect:

- These devices are usually worn every night.
- Most people get used to them after a few nights.
- If you have any discomfort or trouble sleeping, let your healthcare provider know.

Why Use Positional Therapy?

- Positional therapy can reduce snoring and sleep apnea events, especially if you have more problems when sleeping on your back.[1][2][3][4][5][6][7][8][9]

- It is less invasive than other treatments and may be easier to use long-term for some people.
- Note: Not all devices are available everywhere. Ask your healthcare provider about the best options for you.

References

1. Srijithesh PR, Aghoram R, Goel A, Dhanya J. Positional Therapy for Obstructive Sleep Apnoea. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev.* 2019;5:CD010990.
2. ALQarni AS, Turnbull CD, Morrell MJ, Kelly JL. Vibrotactile devices meta-analysis. *Thorax.* 2023;78(11):1126-1134.
3. Eijsvogel MM, et al. Sleep Position Trainer vs Tennis Ball. *J Clin Sleep Med.* 2015;11(2):139-147.
4. Hidalgo Armas L, et al. New Forehead Device RCT. *Thorax.* 2021;76(9):930-938.
5. van Maanen JP, de Vries N. Long-term SPT effectiveness. *Sleep.* 2014;37(7):1209-1215.
6. Laub RR, et al. RCT of Sleep Position Trainer. *J Sleep Res.* 2017;26(5):641-650.
7. Berry RB, et al. NightBalance vs Auto-APAP. *J Clin Sleep Med.* 2019;15(7):947-956.
8. Ravesloot MJL, et al. New-generation positional therapy meta-analysis. *J Clin Sleep Med.* 2017;13(6):813-824.
9. Newell J, et al. Positioning Pillow study. *Sleep Breath.* 2018;22(4):1143-1151.