# Denise Asks Awkward Questions – Menopause and Sleep

**Denise:** Hello everybody. I'm comedian Denise Scott, and welcome to Denise Asks Awkward Questions with Jean Hailes. My guest today is the CEO of the Sleep Health Foundation, Dr. Moira Junge. She is a guru for all the people out there, including me, who toss and turn at night. So without further ado, let's get awkward!

Fran from Mackay in Queensland writes, "I thought only men snored, but my wife sounds like a tugboat at night. She has no idea she even does it. How do I let her know without sounding like a..." Look at a swear word. That's the best I can do. We're not swearing on this show, Moira.

**Moira:** Well, of course she doesn't know that she's snoring like a tugboat because she's asleep. And that's the thing with snorers, they're not aware that they're snoring or they're disturbing the peace because they are asleep. And I think this sounds like it's a new thing and she never used to swear. Um, swear, (laughter) snore, talking about swearing.

And I would think that your wife is probably in menopause or perimenopausal state and maybe didn't snore prior to menopause. Because we always think it's mostly men. And it is mostly men, but by the time a woman hits the menopausal stage, the risk to be a snorer has increased four times for her. So the other question is, how do I talk to her about it without sounding like a insert swear word.

**Denise:** Can I just jump in here?

**Moira:** Yeah.

**Denise:** Because I can, I suggest something Fran doesn't do?

**Moira:** Yeah.

**Denise:** So I was out with my husband, John, and our friend Paul. And Paul said to me, Scotty, do you snore? And I went, "Oh no..." And then John jumped in and went, "Oh yes she does!" And they had this huge conversation, to-ing and fro-ing about...

**Moira:** In front of you?

**Denise:** ...my snoring...

**Moira:** Shaming you!

**Denise:** ...in front of me. I was mortified.

**Moira:** Yeah.

**Denise:** So anyway, that's just a tip for your Fran from a non-health expert.

**Moira:** I think that's a really good point, Denise. And I think a hot tip from a sleep health expert, not a relationship expert, but it might help, is actually using I Statements. So rather than, "You are snoring like a tugboat!" would be, "I've noticed you're snoring and I'm concerned about it."

It's actually, it's the same message, but it's a really nice, gentle, nuanced way of not getting the person's back up.

**Denise:** And your voice. Oh gosh. I'd love to hear it from you.

**Moira:** Yeah, so that's the, you know, the take home for Fran and so many other people like Fran. Like it's a really hard conversation and even in my situation, like I'm the CEO of the Sleep Health Foundation and have worked with a couple of decades in sleep, and my partner has taken like a couple of years really for me to give him a nudge to go to a sleep doctor and get a sleep study. Because he's a snorer and I'm concerned. But it's a tricky conversation to have because it's actually really annoying and you just wanted to sort of throttle them and kick them out of the room. Or you wanna leave the room like, because it's hard to sleep with someone who's loudly snoring.

**Denise:** And it's weirdly... because I, you know, I do stand up, I... But I find it weirdly really embarrassing. Very embarrassing.

**Moira:** To be a snorer?

**Denise:** Yes.

**Moira:** Yeah. And isn't that funny that we... it's something that we're ashamed of or we're ridiculed for, and it's sort of funny, but it's not funny because there's these serious health concerns that if it's sleep apnea and if someone is waking up not getting good sleep quality, waking up multiple times... it becomes an issue for both parties, like it's the bed partner and the snoree... The snoree and the snorer, to actually kind of deal with together. And it's about concerns about health, rather than pitching it in a story like, you know, you are this and you are that, and you are disturbing me. It's actually more that I'm concerned about it and what can we do about it? I think you should go and see someone.

**Denise:** Annika from Rockhampton, Queensland writes, I am sweating so much at night that I have to change the sheets every day. Friends say that's normal when you're going through menopause, but that can't be true.

**Moira:** Yeah, well, well, it can be for, for some people. This comes up all the time for me as a sleep person, I get asked a lot about that because these things happen at night, but this is not a sleep issue. It's a menopause issue. And these days, like 50 years ago, we had no solutions, we had no doctors specializing before Jean Hailes, we didn't know what to do. But these days you wouldn't have to put up with that. Don't put up with... that it's that bad that you're sweating every single night and having to change the sheets, and it just sounds awful, that sounds so debilitating. Annika and other people listening who go through this, talk to your GP, get a referral to a women's health specialist about maybe some medical solutions or other lifestyle things that could actually prevent it being so severe.

My main thing is just don't put up with that. Don't think that's normal because there's help out there.

**Denise:** All right. That's it for today. If I'm not here and you have more questions, go to jeanhailes.org.au. Bye everybody.

Information about Jean Hailes for Women’s Health

Jean Hailes for Women's Health is a national not-for-profit organisation dedicated to improving the health of all women, girls and gender-diverse people. For free, evidence-based and easy-to-understand health information, visit [www.jeanhailes.org.au](http://www.jeanhailes.org.au).

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