

TikTok Trend Deemed Dangerous

The popularity of entertainment app TikTok continues to skyrocket. It has been installed on devices over three billion times worldwide, and has [surpassed](#) Google and Facebook as the world's most popular web domain.

The video sharing app seems to have something for everyone – from makeup trends and relationship advice to comedy sketches and life hacks. In fact, the company's tagline in TV commercials is even, "TikTok taught me." While recipes, fashion finds or cleaning hacks found on the app can certainly provide a smile, improve your life or save you time – sometimes the advice from TikTok influencers can fall flat, especially when that advice is medical in nature.

One of the latest TikTok trends that has medical professionals concerned is mouth taping, which is being touted as a sleep treatment. It is exactly what it sounds like; people are taping their mouths closed before bed. Dr. Kaninika Verma, the clinical sleep director for OSF HealthCare, explains.

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Dr. Kaninika Verma, Clinical Sleep Director, OSF HealthCare

"It started with this TikTok challenge, where people would tape their mouth before they went to sleep. They thought they were sleeping better because it prevented them from opening their mouth, and somehow or another made them sleep better because they were forced to breathe through their nose." (:18)

But before you reach for that tape, be aware that many medical providers, including Dr. Verma, believe the risks of mouth taping far outweigh the benefits. Taping one's mouth shut while sleeping could exacerbate breathing problems, worsen some risk factors of sleep apnea or simply cause sleep disruption.

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Dr. Kaninika Verma, Clinical Sleep Director, OSF HealthCare

"Most of us physicians when we when we first saw this, we thought this was a joke. But clearly it's not. You can buy these mouth tapes on Amazon and CVS and all these things at these places. So it's clearly a real thing, but it is not safe at all." (:20)

Mouth taping enthusiasts claim that the practice helps with dry mouth, bad breath, oral hygiene and snoring prevention. Dr. Verma disagrees, and says taping your mouth shut to improve shuteye is not only dangerous, but could mask the root cause of a sleep problem.

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"It is not healthy. Let's put it that way. So the bigger question is, why are you using that mouth tape? Is it because you're snoring? Is it because you're a mouth breather? Is it because your nasal passages are blocked, or what is going on that's making you do this? So there needs to be a bigger question that needs to be asked, and to take a deeper dive about that issue with a physician or a trained professional." (:30)

Mouth taping is just the most recent TikTok trend branded as health or wellness advice. Dr. Verma warns that health trends popularized via sites like TikTok can have significant consequences, and any health advice coming from these platforms should be interpreted with caution. When in doubt, ask a professional.

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Dr. Kaninika Verma, Clinical Sleep Director, OSF HealthCare

"A lot of these are just fads. There are people doing this for entertainment. So be very cautious and very careful what you believe. If you have an issue – any health care issue – please reach out to your health care professional. You know, most of us – we've trained our whole lives to do this. We've dedicated our lives to this." (:19)

[Sleep disorders](#) are serious medical conditions. Running on a sleep deficit compromises your ability to learn, hinders the immune system, and may raise your risk for other health conditions.

If you think you are having issues with snoring or mouth breathing you should consult your doctor or a sleep specialist. Visit [osfhealthcare.org/sleep](https://www.osfhealthcare.org/sleep) to learn more about OSF Sleep, including programs and services available.