



Welcome to CPAP!

CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) Is The “Gold Standard” For Sleep Apnea Treatment. Here’s What You Need To Know Now

You haven’t been sleeping well. You wake up tired. You’re fatigued and irritable during the day. And your partner says you snore too loud and too often at night.

You go to your doctor, who diagnoses you with sleep apnea.

Your first question: “What is sleep apnea?” Your doctor explains that sleep apnea happens when your airway is obstructed. This interrupts and even stops your breathing while you sleep and decreases the amount of oxygen delivered to vital organs. This can lead to serious health conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, heart attack, stroke, and other impaired cognition issues such as memory loss.

Your doctor then gives you a prescription for a treatment called continuous positive airway pressure, or CPAP for short.

Your second question: “What is CPAP?”

Good question. As a leader in sleep apnea care, it’s one we hear a lot.

CPAP is an effective, proven treatment for sleep apnea where positive pressure is delivered to the patient’s airway acting as a stent to keep the airway open and prevent early airway collapse. With the right pressure, the airway stent will reduce or prevent obstructive apnea events from occurring.

CPAP therapy is so popular that more than 8 million Americans use CPAP machines to treat their condition. That’s why CPAP is considered the “gold standard” of sleep apnea care.

Robert Miller, the Apria Healthcare Vice President of Sleep Business, explains, “CPAP involves wearing a mask that fits comfortably under or over your nose or covers both your mouth and nose while you sleep. The mask is connected to a machine by your bed that provides a constant, quiet flow of air to keep your airways open so you can breathe—and sleep—normally.”

Get the Benefits of CPAP

Studies show that CPAP increases the quantity and quality of your sleep—and in the process, improves your overall health and well-being. Regularly using a CPAP machine can help:

- Increase energy and alertness
- Improve blood pressure levels
- Decrease the risk of heart attack or stroke
- Reduce daytime sleepiness
- Produce a better mood and attitude
- Eliminate snoring
- Improve productivity at work, home, or school



Apria's Robert Miller adds, "When people with sleep apnea begin treatment, the results can be immediate and often quite dramatic. For some new CPAP users it may take some time to acclimate to the new therapy and our Sleep Coaches are here to support them."

Get a Good Start

Once you have been diagnosed with sleep apnea, your doctor will give you a prescription for your CPAP machine and a list of durable medical equipment (DME) providers. **The DME provider will work with you and your doctor to select the most appropriate CPAP machine and accessories for you.**

It's important to select a provider who has the tools and resources to help you through your journey and treatment of sleep apnea. For instance, at Apria, we have Sleep Coaches who will help you select the right style and size of your CPAP mask. They will show you how to properly adjust your mask, so it is as comfortable as possible.

Our Sleep Coaches also will explain how to use your device, how to clean and maintain it, and how to order supplies. They will be a resource and support you while you become acclimated to your CPAP equipment.

Select the Right Mask for Your Sleeping Position

Getting the most from your sleep apnea treatment depends on wearing the mask that fits how you sleep.

The 5 Most Common Masks

CPAP masks come in many combinations, but there are basically five types:

- Nasal masks that fit over your nose only and are lighter than full-face masks
- Nasal pillow masks, which are even lighter and smaller than nasal masks
- Oral masks, which seal around the mouth and require minimal headgear
- Full-face masks that cover your mouth and nose
- Under the nose masks fit comfortably under the nose without entering the nares

All these masks are available in various sizes. The solution to getting the right mask for you is to work with your doctor to decide which type of mask best suits your sleeping position.

Best CPAP Masks for Stomach Sleepers

Of all the sleeping positions, this is the rarest. It also offers some challenges. For example, sleeping on your stomach often presses the mask on your face, which leads to air leaks or mask displacement. Sleeping with a mask in this position can be uncomfortable and can also result in neck and back pain.

For people who sleep on their stomachs, **a nasal pillow mask is the most appropriate.** Because these masks have a low profile, they are less likely to become dislodged or cause pain.



Best CPAP Masks for Side Sleepers

Sleeping on your side is the best position for people with sleep apnea. Unlike sleeping on your back or stomach, side sleeping prevents gravity from interfering with your airways.

The challenge for side sleepers: your mask touches the pillow, which can dislodge the mask. That's why a **nasal mask or nasal pillow mask is recommended** for side sleepers. These masks are smaller and more flexible to help reduce the risk of displacing the mask while also ensuring a secure seal.

Best CPAP Masks for Back Sleepers

If you have sleep apnea, most doctors and sleep specialists do not recommend sleeping on your back since this position can impact your airways due to gravity. You're also more likely to snore because your tongue and other tissues in your upper airway block the back of your throat.

However, back sleepers have the widest choice of CPAP masks. **Full-face, nasal pillow, under the nose masks, and nasal masks are all recommended** for back sleepers. Choose a CPAP mask that's easy to put on or remove during the night. Also, be sure your mask doesn't have connections at the back of the head, which will interfere with sleeping.

Best CPAP Masks for Mouth Breathers

If you sleep with your mouth open, you need a mask that covers nearly your entire face while allowing you to breathe naturally while you sleep. That's why a **full-face CPAP mask is an excellent choice**.

However, some people find it hard to sleep with a full-face mask. A popular alternative is a chin strap paired with a nasal mask or a nasal pillow CPAP mask. This option also helps reduce the side effects of mouth breathing, such as sore throat, tooth decay, and mouth dryness.

Best CPAP Masks for Nose Breathers

Breathing through your nose offers a variety of advantages: it reduces your exposure to foreign substances while heating and humidifying the air you breathe. Plus, it increases your intake of oxygen.

For people with sleep apnea who breathe through their nose, there's another big advantage: **you can use nearly any type of CPAP mask (except an oral mask)** to help ensure effective treatment.

Best CPAP Masks for Active Sleepers

If you toss and turn throughout the night, it's best to **choose a CPAP mask that has connections at the top of the head**. These feature short, flexible tubes that adjust to your movements to help prevent the hose from becoming entangled.

Best CPAP Masks for People with a Deviated Septum

A deviated septum is a condition where the thin wall between your nasal passages is pushed to one side. For people with this condition, **an oral CPAP mask is most appropriate** because it prevents them from breathing through their nose.



Regularly Clean and Replace Your CPAP Supplies

It's important to regularly clean your CPAP machine. This can help prevent the buildup of bacteria, mold, dust, and germs, which may cause such conditions as pneumonia or sinus infections.

Robert Miller, the Apria Healthcare VP of Sleep Business, states, "There is another advantage to keeping your CPAP machine clean: it helps keep your equipment working longer. And that can save you money."

Here are some general recommendations for keeping your CPAP machine clean. Please note, because each CPAP brand is different, you should follow the manufacturer's directions for cleaning.

The cleaning supplies you'll need

- Warm, clean water
- Mild soap (although don't use harsh dish detergents, alcohol, bleach, strong-smelling products, scented oils, or antibacterial soaps)
- Clean, dry towels
- A sink, tub, or basin large enough to hold your hose or tubing
- Also, reserve enough space to allow your equipment to dry.

How often to clean your CPAP machine

Most manufacturers and sleep experts recommend cleaning your CPAP machine daily—or at the very least weekly.

Ideally, the following components should be cleaned daily.

CPAP mask

Because your mask touches your face, bacteria and dead skin cells can collect on it. So it's important to clean it daily to prevent infection. Plus, masks that aren't regularly cleaned can lead to leaks, which can cause skin or eye irritation and hamper the success of your therapy.

Your mask has three parts: the cushion, headgear, and frame. Each should be removed and washed in mild soapy water and rinsed thoroughly. Then let them completely air dry—preferably in a low-dust space.

To disinfect the cushion weekly, you may also want to soak it in a mixture of water and vinegar for 20 minutes, then rinse with distilled water.

Want to extend the life of your mask? Wash your face before you put on your mask. Lotions and makeup can affect the integrity of the silicone used to produce masks.

Ideally, the following components should be cleaned weekly.

CPAP filters



Depending on your CPAP machine, it may have both reusable filters and disposable filters.

Reusable filters should be washed at least once a week, depending on how much pollen, dander, and dust they attract. Regularly cleaning them prevents harmful particles from entering your CPAP machine.

To clean, rinse the filters under warm water, squeeze out excess water, then dry with a clean towel. Let them air dry before putting them back in your CPAP.

Disposable filters should be replaced about every two weeks, or according to the manufacturer's instructions.

CPAP tubing

Wash with mild soap and warm water. Be sure to clean the inside of the tubing by submerging it under water. Then rinse and hang to dry.

Don't use bleach or scented products, which can break down tubing material and release unhealthy vapors into your CPAP. Also, depending on the manufacturer, tubing should be replaced every 3 months.

CPAP humidifier

Wash the humidifier's water chamber with hot water and mild soap and allow it to air dry.

You can also sanitize your humidifier by filling it with a solution of equal parts white vinegar and warm water and letting it sit for 20 minutes. Then rinse.

Avoid Common CPAP Complaints

Dry mouth

Dry mouth affects many people who use a CPAP device to treat sleep apnea. Here's how to stop it:

1. **Keep the air moist:** A CPAP humidifier effectively replaces moisture by releasing warm, moist air from a small water chamber into the air delivered by your CPAP machine. Some CPAP machines have a humidifier built in. There are also external humidifiers that attach to your CPAP machine.
2. **Make sure your mask fits:** A mask that doesn't fit properly and seal securely increases the risk of air leaks and dry mouth, which may reduce the effectiveness of your CPAP therapy.
3. **Keep your mouth closed when you breathe:** CPAP dry mouth is often caused by breathing through your mouth. So, if possible, breathe through your nose. If that doesn't work, try a chin strap, which wraps around your head and chin to help keep your mouth closed.
4. **Clear nasal congestion:** Mouth breathing is often caused by nasal congestion. Your doctor may recommend saltwater sprays or oral medications that can clear nasal passages to help reduce mouth breathing.
5. **Drink more water:** Your mouth may be dry because you are dehydrated. The solution: drink more water throughout the day. But not too close to bedtime since you don't want to make multiple nighttime trips to the bathroom.



CPAP rainout or moisture buildup in your CPAP tubing

Do you notice water in your mask or condensation in your tubing? That's CPAP rainout. And it's very common.

Rainout happens when the air heated by your humidifier cools in your tubing, which condenses into small water droplets. The air blowing through the tubing then pushes the droplets into your mask—and face. This sounds like gurgling, spitting, or splashing and can be very unpleasant. It can also wake you up and cause anxiety or feelings of claustrophobia.

Here's how to help stop CPAP rainout:

1. **Adjust your humidifier settings:** To help correct rainout, turn down the humidifier setting. You can also turn down the temperature setting on your CPAP machine, especially if you live in a warm or humid climate. You may also want to look into newer CPAP machines that automatically adjust settings to ensure you get the ideal humidity.
2. **Adjust your bedroom temperature:** If your bedroom is too cold, it can cause condensation to form in your tubing and mask. Experiment and find the temperature that's comfortable to sleep in but also doesn't cause rainout.
3. **Use heated CPAP tubing:** Heated tubing keeps the temperature of the air consistent as it travels from the humidifier to your mask. By keeping the air consistently warm, it doesn't condense into droplets. Heated tubing is particularly helpful when your bedroom is cool.
4. **Keep your hose under wraps:** Look into specially designed tube covers that you can wrap around your hose. These insulate the hose and keep the air inside it warm. You can even run the hose beneath your blankets to provide warmth for the hose.
5. **Go low with your CPAP:** If your CPAP machine is at the same level as your mask, move your device to a lower level or even put it on the floor. Thanks to the miracle of gravity, any condensation that forms will run down the hose into the humidifier rather than flowing into your mask and face as you sleep.

Adjusting to your CPAP

Your CPAP machine has a feature called "ramp." This lets you start with low air pressure. Then the CPAP machine automatically and gradually increases the air pressure until it reaches your prescribed pressure.

If you are still having a problem, talk to your doctor about adjusting the rate.

Skin irritation from your CPAP mask

If you suspect you have CPAP-related dermatitis, the first step is to identify and address the underlying cause. Here are some strategies to help alleviate your symptoms:

1. **Adjust Your Mask:** Ensure your mask fits snugly but not too tight. If it's too loose or too tight, adjust the straps accordingly to reduce pressure or friction on your skin.



2. **Clean Your Mask Regularly:** Follow a consistent cleaning schedule to prevent the buildup of bacteria, mold, and other irritants. Use mild soap and water, and allow the mask to dry completely before using it again.
3. **Consider Mask Liners:** Mask liners can act as a barrier between your skin and the mask, reducing irritation. These liners are made from soft, breathable materials that help minimize friction and pressure.
4. **Use Over-the-Counter Steroid Creams:** If your skin is irritated, applying an over-the-counter hydrocortisone cream can help reduce inflammation and soothe the affected area. However, avoid using petroleum-based products, as they can degrade the mask material.

Say Goodnight to a Bad Night's Sleep

Using your CPAP device every night will help you get the quantity and quality of sleep you need to function during the day. Robert Miller adds, "If you have any questions or problems, don't hesitate to talk to your doctor. Or contact Apria, our Sleep Coaches are also standing by and ready to help."

References

- Summer, J. (2022, September 20). How to Choose a CPAP Mask Based On Your Sleep Position. Sleep Foundation. <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/cpap/choosing-cpap-mask-for-your-sleep-position>.
- Fountain, L. (2022, September 16). Best CPAP Masks for Side Sleepers. Sleep Foundation. <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/best-cpap-mask/best-cpap-mask-for-side-sleepers>.
- CPAP Machine Cleaning: Ozone, UV Light Products Are Not FDA Approved. FDA. <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/cpap-machine-cleaning-ozone-uv-light-products-are-not-fda-approved>.
- Fountain, L. (Updated 2022, July 19). How to Clean a CPAP Machine. Sleep Foundation. <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/cpap/how-to-clean-a-cpap-machine>.
- Peters, Brandon. (Updated 2021, September 12). CPAP Cleaning Tips: A Step-By-Step Maintenance Guide. VeryWell Health. <https://www.verywellhealth.com/how-to-clean-cpap-3015322>.
- Dry mouth. Mayo Clinic. <https://www.google.com/search?q=what+is+xerostomia&aq=what+is+xerostomia&aqs=chrome..69i57j0i512i5j0i22i30i4.2780j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>.
- Common CPAP complaint: Dry mouth. ResMed. <https://www.resmed.com/en-us/sleep-apnea/sleep-blog/common-cpap-complaint-dry-mouth/#:~:text=If%20you've%20ever%20felt,and%20difficulty%20talking%20or%20eating>.
- Summer, J. (Updated 2022, November 8). CPAP Dry Mouth: How to Stop It. Sleep Foundation. <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/cpap/cpap-dry-mouth>.
- Peters, B. (Updated 2023, February 16). How to Prevent Dry Mouth During CPAP Therapy: Common Causes and Treatments. Verywell Health. <https://www.verywellhealth.com/how-to-prevent-mouth-breathing-on-cpap-3015215>.
- Bond, L. (Updated 2023, February). Your Persistent Dry Mouth May Not Be CPAP Related. SleepApnea.Sleep-Disorders.net. <https://sleepapnea.sleep-disorders.net/living/dry-mouth>.
- Peters, B. (Updated 2023, January 11). How to Avoid Water, Rainout, and Moisture in CPAP Tubing and Masks. Verywell Health. <https://www.verywellhealth.com/how-to-avoid-moisture-in-cpap-tubing-3015190>.
- Avoid CPAP rainout. ResMed. <https://www.resmed.com/en-us/sleep-apnea/sleep-blog/avoid-cpap-rainout/>.
- CPAP hose rainout. Sleep Apnea Guide. <https://www.sleep-apnea-guide.com/cpap-hose-rainout.html>.
- CPAP Condensation. Sleep Apnea Guide. <https://www.sleep-apnea-guide.com/cpap-condensation.html>.
- Meadows, A. (Updated 2023, February 16). Should You Use Distilled Water for a CPAP Machine? Sleep Foundation. <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/cpap/should-you-use-distilled-water-for-a-cpap-machine>.



Peters, B. (Updated 2022, May 24). Do You Have to Use Only Distilled Water in the CPAP Humidifier? Verywell Health. <https://www.verywellhealth.com/do-you-need-distilled-water-for-the-cpap-humidifier-3015017>

Egesi, Aadaeze, and Mark D.P. Davis. "Irritant Contact Dermatitis Due to the Use of a Continuous Positive Airway Pressure Nasal Mask: 2 Case Reports and Review of the Literature." CUTIS, 2012.

Mayo Clinic Staff. "Dermatitis." Mayo Clinic, September 8, 2023. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/dermatitis-eczema/symptoms-causes/syc-20352380>

Roberts, Michael, David B Roy, Marcus Goodman, and Gagandeep Grewal. "Case Series of Perioral Dermatitis Caused by Improper Use of Activated Oxygen." The Journal of clinical and aesthetic dermatology, November 14, 2021. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8675344/>

Soundararajan, Vinaya, Jennifer Lor, and Anna B Fishbein. "Sleep Apnea and Skin." Current sleep medicine reports, September 1, 2020. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7986992/>

LEGAL DISCLAIMER: Material in this newsletter is provided for general health education and informational purposes and to provide references to other resources only; it may not apply to you as an individual. While Apria Healthcare believes that the information provided through this communication is accurate and reliable, Apria Healthcare cannot and does not make any such guarantee. It is not intended to be a replacement for professional medical advice, evaluation, diagnosis, services or treatment (collectively, "medical treatment"). Please see your healthcare provider for medical treatment related to you and your specific health condition(s). Never disregard medical advice or delay seeking medical care because of something you have read on or accessed through this website. Reading this newsletter should not be construed to mean that you have a healthcare provider/patient relationship.