

New to CPAP? Now What?

 Posted by: Apria

CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) Is The “Gold Standard” For Sleep Apnea Care. 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?” And 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 obesity.

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. That’s why we’ve created this post specifically for people new to CPAP.

You’re Joining 8 Million Other Americans

CPAP is an effective, proven treatment for sleep apnea. It’s 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.”**

Consider BIPAP, the Alternative to CPAP

Some people benefit from an alternative to CPAP called **BiPAP (bilevel positive airway pressure)**. Both require a face mask and tubing connected to a device that pumps air to help you breathe more normally. But **BiPAP delivers pressurized air at two alternating levels: one level when you inhale, another when you exhale.**

Because BiPAP uses two pressures, it is more like natural breathing, which many people with sleep apnea find more comfortable.

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 help select the most appropriate CPAP machine and accessories for you.

It's important to select a provider who is an expert in the 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.

The three most popular types of masks are:

- Full-face masks that cover your mouth and nose
- 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

Take Time to Get Used to It

Like anything else, it takes time to get used to using your CPAP machine. **To start, try wearing just the CPAP mask for short periods during the day.**

When that feels comfortable, attach the hose to the mask and turn on the machine. Watch TV, read a book, or even cook.

Once you get used to the mask, the next step is to use the CPAP machine every time you sleep—even when you nap.

Stick with this for a few weeks. If you have any problems, be sure to talk to your doctor.

Regularly Clean and Replace Your CPAP Supplies

By keeping your CPAP machine clean, you prevent the build-up of any harmful bacteria or mold. Clean your mask, tubing, and water chamber regularly—ideally, every day but **at least once a week**. And follow the manufacturer's guidelines for cleaning your CPAP or BiPAP machine.

For your therapy to be successful, it is important to have the supplies you need when you need them—and to replace them regularly. Timely replacement provides two important benefits:

- Ensures a consistently secure and comfortable mask seal

- Reduces the buildup of bacteria, viruses, and allergens that can lead to infection

To help ensure you have the right supplies right when you need them, we've created the Supplies on Schedule program. [Learn more here.](#)

Say Goodnight to a Bad Night's Sleep

Using your CPAP or BiPAP 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. Our Sleep Coaches are also standing by and ready to help."