



# Obstructive Sleep Apnea and Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP)

If you have obstructive sleep apnea, CPAP can help you feel more awake, snore less, and generally feel better. Plan to use CPAP every time you sleep. The longer that you wear CPAP during sleep, the more likely you will get benefit from it. This handout offers tips and resources for common CPAP problems, how to care for your equipment, and ways to cover the costs. You can always talk to your health care team and CPAP supplier about any issues you are having.

## TIPS FOR COMMON CPAP PROBLEMS

### What if I have a leaky mask, pressure marks, or skin irritation?

- A leaky mask means that it is not fitting properly, and you may not be getting the air pressure you need. This can also cause skin irritation and dry eyes.
- If the mask is wet inside when you are sleeping, try lowering the CPAP machine to be closer to the floor, so it is lower than where you sleep.
- You may need to adjust your headgear or speak to your CPAP supplier about a different size or type of mask.

### What if I get a dry stuffy nose, or dry mouth and eyes?

- A heated humidifier can be attached to the CPAP machine to add moisture to the air before going into your mask.
- If you continue to get a stuffy nose, your doctor can determine if it is caused by another medical condition.
- You can also ask your pharmacist about products that can help with dry mouth and dry eyes.

### What if I feel claustrophobic?

- It may take time and practice to feel comfortable wearing the mask. If you feel anxious or claustrophobic, relaxation exercises might help. If the feeling continues, talk with your doctor or CPAP supplier.

### What if the mask falls off when I sleep?

- If you move around a lot when you sleep, you might need a full face mask.
- If you remove the mask because you are feeling congested, you may need to try a humidifier or a chin strap.
- You can also set an alarm to check if the mask is still on during the night.

### What if the machine is too noisy and keeps me awake?

- Make sure the air filter is clean and not blocked (refer to page 2 of this handout). Your supplier can also check that the machine is working properly.
- Wearing ear plugs, using a white noise machine, or positioning the machine farther away from your bed can also help.

## YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION HERE:

CPAP Machines: Tips for Avoiding 10 Common Problems

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/sleep-apnea/in-depth/cpap/art-20044164>



## HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR CPAP EQUIPMENT

Keeping your CPAP equipment clean and in good condition is important. To learn how to take care of your specific CPAP equipment, read the instructions in the owner's manual. If you have any problems, you can ask your machine supplier for help.

### Clean your CPAP mask every day:

- Wash it with pure soap and warm water. Avoid using soap with bleach, chlorine, alcohol, moisturizers, scents, or antibacterial agents.
- Rinse the mask in plain water or water mixed with plain white vinegar. Vinegar in the rinse water will help to cut down on smells and germs.
- Don't dry the mask in direct sunlight.

### Take care of your tubing and headgear every week:

- Wash them with pure soap and warm water.
- Gently dry them with a towel, then let them air dry.
- Check if the tubing and headgear are getting worn out. If they are, you might need to replace them.

### Changing the CPAP filter:

- Change the filter on your CPAP machine every 2 months, or as needed.

### Humidifier care:

- Empty the humidifier before moving your CPAP machine. Make sure water doesn't spill into the CPAP machine.
- If you have a heated humidifier:
  - Use distilled water and replace it every night.
  - Follow the instructions in the manual to clean your humidifier.

## HERE ARE WAYS TO PAY FOR YOUR CPAP MACHINE:

- Your provincial/territorial health coverage might cover some of the cost of your CPAP treatment, depending on where you live.
- Many insurance policies may also cover CPAP equipment prescribed by a sleep doctor. Your insurance company will ask for a copy of your prescription when you make a claim.



## SLEEP APNEA AND CPAP RESOURCES



### Canadian Lung Association

<https://www.lung.ca/lung-health/lung-disease/sleep-apnea>

Treatment for sleep apnea: <https://www.lung.ca/treatment-12>

Living with sleep apnea: <https://www.lung.ca/living-sleep-apnea>

### Mayo Clinic

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/sleep-apnea/symptoms-causes/syc-20377631>