

FAQs About CPAP Therapy for Sleep Apnea

For how long will I have to use CPAP?

CPAP stands for Continuous Positive Airway Pressure and is a machine that provides therapy for people who have been diagnosed with obstructive sleep apnea. You will most likely continue using the CPAP device as long as your condition/diagnosis remains the same. Some patients find that they do not need to use their device or can reduce their pressure settings after significant weight loss. It is important to talk to your doctor before you stop therapy. You may benefit from a sleep study to determine a lower pressure or to evaluate a change in the severity of your condition.

Will I have to use CPAP every night?

You should use the CPAP machine as ordered by your physician. It is generally recommended that you use your machine every night. If at first you experience some difficulty staying asleep with the mask on for a long period, it is recommended that you use it every night for as long as you can. Then, try adding 30 minutes to 1 hour to your usage time nightly until you have fully adapted to the machine.

What should I do if my mask leaks air and is uncomfortable?

All masks are designed with exhalation ports, or small apertures where the pressurized air is released. If you notice air blowing out of these small ports, that is normal. However, it is important not to have air blowing around your face and into your eyes. Please contact your home care company if you are experiencing excessive air leakage or discomfort with your mask. Their staff will explain how to avoid these problems or work with you on a different mask or size of mask.

How often should I replace and clean the filter on my CPAP machine?

If you are using a disposable filter (usually white colored and thinner than a non-disposable filter) you should change it twice a month. However, keep in mind that you may need to swap out these filters more often depending on the quality of the air in your room.

Sometimes I sense some dryness in my nose, mouth or throat. What should I do?

A heated humidifier specifically designed for your CPAP device may help reduce dryness. Please refer to the user manual for operation instructions. If you have not received a heated humidifier along with your CPAP device or if you have questions about the operation of your heated humidifier, please contact your home care company. Increasing the humidity may help with the dryness.

How much and what kind of water should I use with the heated humidifier?

Most humidifiers come with a water chamber that has a maximum water level mark on them. Do not pour water past this mark. The water used with the humidifier needs to be distilled water and must be changed daily. Please refer to your user manual for more information.

At times, it feels like I am getting too much or too little air, what should I do?

The air pressure on your device is normally based on the results of your sleep test. At times, it will take up to eight weeks for you to fully adapt to this pressure. However, if you feel like the pressure is causing you excessive difficulty, please contact your doctor or your home company and they will assist you.

Who do I contact if my machine breaks down or stops working properly?

Please contact your home care company.

How long will my mask and other accessories last and how do I get them replaced?

One of the most important steps in taking charge of your health and maintaining effective therapy is replacing your mask and supplied regularly. Just as you replace your toothbrush, razor blades and many everyday items, it is important for your comfort and health that you replace your mask and supplies as recommended to ensure every component is working at its best. Even minimal replacement can help drive effective therapy. However, failing to replace certain items on the mask and CPAP device may lead to poor outcomes.

Most insurance companies will authorize replacement parts every 90 days. If you are unsure, contact your home care company. Some companies will also call when it is time to replace parts or masks.

How often should I clean my CPAP and supplies?

Daily:

Wash the mask cushion in warm, soapy water (do not use a degreaser like Dawn) – rinse and allow to air dry
Change the distilled water in the humidifier tank

Weekly:

Wash the humidifier tank in warm, soapy water – rinse and allow to air dry
Wash the tubing in warm, soapy water – rinse and allow to air dry

Monthly:

Change the cushion on the mask
Change the filter in the CPAP device (may replace up to two times per month)