

RELIABLE MEDICAL SUPPLY

CPAP / BILEVEL Therapy Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why has my doctor ordered cpap therapy for me?

A: *Cpap therapy provides air pressure to your breathing passage through a mask usually fitted to your nose. The amount of pressure is specific for you to “inflate” your airway to alleviate the symptoms associated with snoring and obstructive sleep apnea. While using your cpap you should no longer snore or stop breathing due to an obstructed airway. Cpap stands for Continuous Positive Airway Pressure.*

Q: What is obstructive sleep apnea, and how does my doctor know that I have it?

A: *Obstructive sleep apnea is diagnosed by an overnight sleep study which detects obstruction to normal breathing during sleep. This obstruction is usually associated with snoring. Snoring is caused by air being forced through a narrowing of the soft tissues in the back of your throat. When this narrowing of the soft tissues deteriorates to allow no airflow, we call this obstructive sleep apnea. Apnea is defined as the cessation of breathing. Persons with obstructive sleep apnea awaken many times per night without even realizing it in order to open their airway. They then fall asleep again, only to repeat the process minutes later. This is why the obstructive sleep apnea patient feels so tired after “sleeping” for what should be long enough to feel rested.*

Q: How long will I need to use cpap therapy?

A: *For most patients using cpap is a lifetime requirement. Cpap works to correct obstructive sleep apnea only while it is used. It is not a treatment which corrects the obstruction; so as to eventually not require its use. However, some cpap users are able to lose a significant amount of body weight which can lessen or eliminate the need for cpap therapy. Use your cpap every night and with naps during the day also, if necessary.*

Q: How will I know if cpap is working for me?

A: *After sleeping throughout the night with the cpap you should feel more rested and alert during the day. Sleep deprivation is accumulative however, and it may take a while to “catch up” on your sleep. Do not be discouraged if you don’t sleep through the night with your cpap right from the start. It may take a while for you to get accustomed to the mask and air pressure, but you will be able to fall asleep with it and gain its benefits if you are consistent with its use.*

Q: Are there different masks I can use with my cpap?

A: Yes, there are many types of masks available and a choice of manufacturers for most types. There are 3 main categories of masks. The first category is the nasal triangle shaped mask. It is the most common, covering just your nose with a soft triangular shaped cushion. There are also nasal applications that fit directly to your nostrils without covering your nose completely, and finally masks that cover your nose and mouth. These are the 3 main classifications and there are many within each classification and even some others out there. Contact your Medical Equipment Supplier for more detailed information to help decide which device would be right for you.

Q: Can I change the pressure on my cpap machine.

A: First of all, remember that the pressure your machine is set at was ordered by your doctor and is specific for you to keep your airway open. Therefore any changes of the pressure setting must be ordered by your doctor also. Changing the pressure on your machine may hinder its ability to correct your sleep apnea; however, you can temporarily decrease the pressure on most machines by using the ramp feature. The ramp feature allows the machine to start at a low more tolerable pressure, and then gradually “ramp up” to your therapeutic pressure automatically over a preset amount of time. This feature is very useful for falling asleep and getting accustomed to the pressure.

Q: What happens if I don't use my cpap for a night or two?

A: The detrimental health effects of sleep apnea occur over a prolonged period of time with sleep deprivation. Not using the cpap short term will mostly just bring you back to how you felt before starting cpap therapy... tired. Preferably use your cpap every night.

Q: Can I use my cpap on battery power?

A: Most cpap's are adaptable to battery power, features do vary however. All cpap machines can operate on battery power using a power inverter which changes the batteries DC power to AC power just like a wall outlet. The inverter is a small, approximately 4 inch square box with a cord to connect to a battery and a plug socket on its side for the cpap power cord. A 100 amp hour deep cycle marine battery will operate a cpap machine at an average pressure for about 4 nights. Operating the heated humidifier on battery power greatly reduces battery life and is not recommended.

Q: How about using my cpap in another country on 220 volts?

A: Check your machines manual for specific manufacturer instructions. Many machines now adjust themselves automatically to whatever it is plugged in to. Other machines can be switched manually to adjust to the specified voltage; a fuse change may be required also. In either case a plug adaptor will be required for the power cord to fit the foreign outlet.

Q: Why do I need a heated humidifier?

A: Cpap therapy forces much dry air through your airway which can be irritating and cause uncomfortable dryness, swelling of tissues, and increased mucous production. Heated humidity has been proven effective to lessen or eliminate these symptoms.

Q: Does my health insurance cover my cpap machine and supplies?

A: Your insurance company will be able to tell you their specific policy for covering durable medical equipment and related supplies. Coverage varies greatly, from no coverage at all to 100% coverage. Most companies do cover as long as they get the proper documentation from the sleep lab and an order from your doctor. Often coverage is 80% paid by the insurance company and 20% paid by you. If you have secondary coverage, make sure your equipment company has the information on both companies. They will be able to bill both of them. Coverage varies also on subsequent supplies needed later on, new mask, filters, etc. Commonly insurance will cover supplies every 6 months. Again, check for specifics with your insurance company.