

Nasal Continuous Positive Airway Pressure

Nasal continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) is used to treat obstructive sleep apnea. Apnea is a condition in which breathing stops for 10 seconds or longer. Obstructive sleep apnea occurs when the airway is blocked during sleep. No air moves in or out of the lungs. The blockage may be caused by the tongue or the soft part of the mouth falling over the airway.

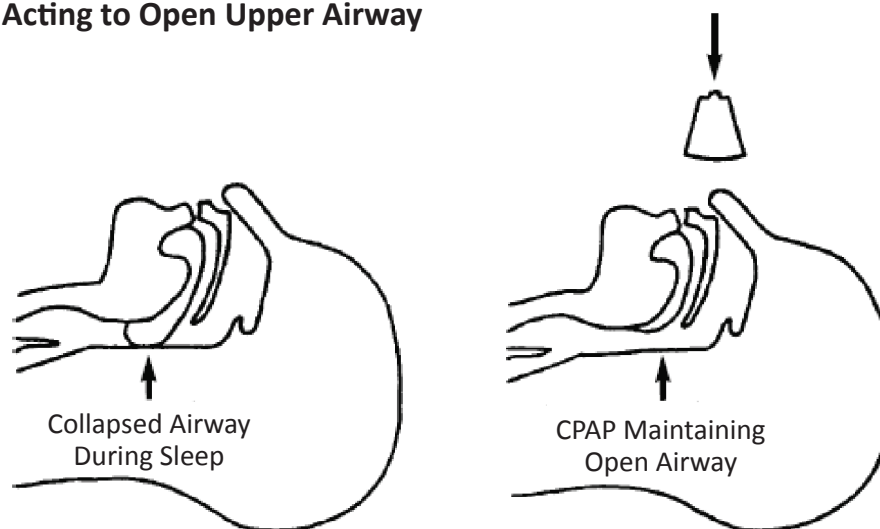
The nasal CPAP system treats obstructive sleep apnea.

During a period of apnea, the oxygen level in the blood falls. This causes the patient to awaken slightly, without knowing it, so that breathing can resume. Apnea can last from just a few seconds to more than a minute. It can occur many times during the night. This results in a loss of restful, healthy sleep. The lack of sleep may cause:

- Daytime sleepiness
- Headaches
- Accidents
- Poor memory
- Lack of concentration
- Irritability

The nasal CPAP system consists of a mask that fits over your nose. Air pressure blows into your nose and holds the airway open. This allows for normal breathing and restful sleep.

Nasal CPAP Acting to Open Upper Airway



Sleep apnea can be unsafe if it is not treated. The low oxygen level may harm the heart and other organs. That is why it is very important for you to use CPAP. Obstructive sleep apnea returns when CPAP is not used. By using CPAP:

- You will breathe more easily during sleep.
- You won't awaken as often.
- You will get the restful sleep you need.

Preparation

If you are found to need CPAP, this is what you can expect:

- You and your family will be trained to use the system by staff at the sleep lab, hospital or home care company.
- When you get your unit from the home care company, instructions about equipment and care will be given along with proper mask-fitting and supplies.
- The home care company will set the machine as instructed by your doctor.
- You will be given phone numbers for those who can best answer your questions.

Set-up

- Place the CPAP unit on a sturdy table near your bed.
- If your unit has a humidity chamber, fill it with distilled water.
- Plug in the power cord to the wall outlet.
- Connect the tubing to the machine.

At Bedtime

- Put the mask over your nose.
- Adjust mask to assure a good fit.
- Turn on the power switch.
- Lie down, relax and breathe through your nose.
- In the morning, turn off the machine. Remove your mask for cleaning.

Helpful Hints

- Use CPAP consistently for best results.
- Use warm water and liquid dishwashing soap to clean the mask and tubing. Clean the mask daily. Clean tubing weekly, or more often if needed. Be sure to rinse the mask and tubing well with water to remove any soap.
- For ease in future mask fittings, you may wish to use permanent ink to mark the straps at the final strap position.

- Wash your face to remove excess oils before using the mask. This will help in securing the mask and improve the useful life of the mask.
- The CPAP is designed so that you can sleep in any position that is comfortable. Sleeping on your stomach is not usually comfortable.

Troubleshooting

- **Discomfort from feeling too much pressure:** It will take time to adjust to nasal CPAP. Use the ramp feature if it is available on your machine. Relax and breathe slowly through your nose.
- **Dryness of your nose:** Use a room humidifier or call your doctor or home care company about adding a humidifier to your CPAP system.
- **Soreness to the bridge of your nose:** Ask your doctor or home care company about using a special dressing to prevent skin breakdown.
- **Eye soreness:** Contact the home care company. You can be fitted with a different size mask.
- **Nose or ear infections:** These may be made worse by the mild pressure. If this occurs, stop using CPAP. Call your doctor immediately. Resume CPAP when instructed by your doctor.
- **Runny nose:** Call your doctor; it can be treated easily.

Contact Information

Name	Phone Number
Doctor _____	_____
Nurse _____	_____
Homecare Company _____	_____

Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at hlc@nm.org, or by calling 312.926.5465. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at nm.org.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363 or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

Developed by: NMH Sleep Disorders Center