

## Nasal Continuous Positive Airway Pressure

*The nasal CPAP system treats obstructive sleep apnea.*

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.

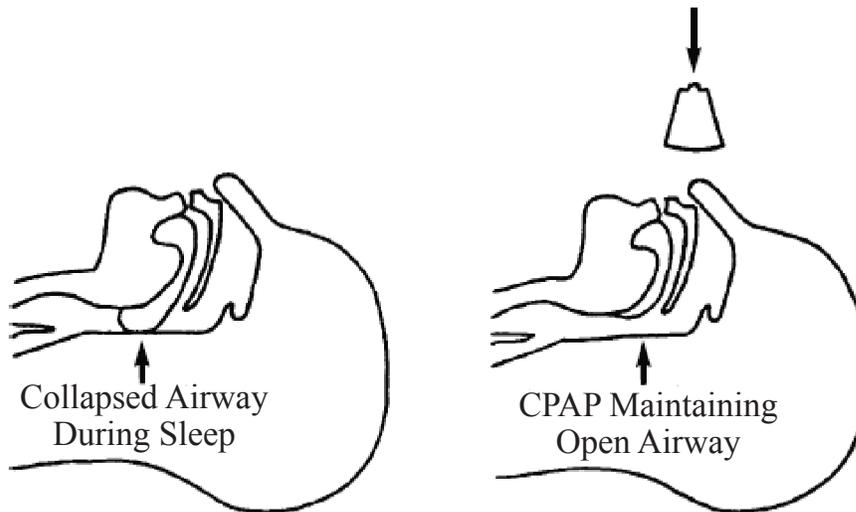
During a period of apnea, the oxygen level in the blood falls. This causes the patient to awaken slightly, without knowing it, so that breathing can resume. Apnea can last from just a few seconds to more than a minute. It can occur many times during the night. This results in a loss of restful, healthy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

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

The low oxygen level may harm the heart and other organs.

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



### 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, instruction 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 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.

Sleep apnea, if not treated, can be unsafe. 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, won't awaken as often and will get the restful sleep you need.

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

### Health Information Resources

For more information, visit one of Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Health Learning Centers. These state-of-the-art health libraries are located on the third floor of the Galter Pavilion and on the first floor of the Prentice Women's Hospital. Health information professionals are available to help you find the information you need and provide you with personalized support at no charge. You may contact the Health Learning Centers by calling 312-926-LINK (5465) or by sending an e-mail to [hlc@nmh.org](mailto:hlc@nmh.org).

For additional information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit our Web site at [www.nmh.org](http://www.nmh.org).

*Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar a el departamento de representantes para pacientes al 312-926-3112.*

Northwestern Memorial is an equal opportunity employer that welcomes, respects and serves with dignity all people and does not discriminate, including in hiring, or employment, or admission, or access to, or treatment in its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, religion, disability, handicap, age, Vietnam or other veteran status, sexual orientation or any other status protected by relevant law. To arrange for TDD/TTY, auxiliary aids and foreign language interpretation services, call the Patient Representative department at 312-926-3112, TDD number 312-926-6363. Issues related to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 should be directed to the director of Employee Relations or designee at 312-926-7297.

Developed by: Sleep Disorders Center

© November 2007 Northwestern Memorial Hospital  
For more information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit [www.nmh.org](http://www.nmh.org).  
1100-07  
900531 (11/09)