



Important Things to Know About Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) and sleep

- You should start to feel better during the day after you start CPAP.
- CPAP helps your health and wellbeing in many ways.
- Sometimes people using CPAP need a change in their pressure. This needs discussion with a specialist.
- Not everyone finds using CPAP easy but there are things you can do to help.

Why is it important to use CPAP?

If you suffer from **Obstructive Sleep Apnoea (OSA)** and need treatment, the best option we have right now is CPAP. Full details about this treatment can be found on our **Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP)** page.

CPAP can improve the health of people with OSA in many ways, although these may not be obvious straight away. CPAP may be good for blood pressure and diabetes. It may lower the risk of heart attacks and strokes as well. Many people feel much better after they start using CPAP. They wake up feeling more refreshed in the morning and are less sleepy during the day. Energy levels tend to up. This helps concentration. Mood is better, as is libido. Until treated, people with OSA often snore loudly and thrash about in bed at night. Successful treatment of OSA also helps the bed partner's sleep.

What if my sleep apnoea symptoms seem to be coming back?

Your sleep specialist may need to check and adjust the pump pressure from time to time. This may need to be done even if CPAP is used well. Some people suffer a return to their original symptoms and start snoring again, feel tired or have difficulty concentrating during the day. If this happens to you, you need to get in touch with your sleep specialist or CPAP supplier. There are many reasons

for your symptoms returning. The machine pressure setting may need to change or there may be a problem with your mask. Your sleep specialist or CPAP supplier will be the best person to help. They are used to dealing with these problems. After the treatment is adjusted you will get back on track.

What might cause the need for pressure change?

If there has been a weight gain, a higher pressure is often needed. Just the process of getting older can change how much CPAP pressure is needed. For some people, their sleep apnoea is worse when sleeping on their back than on their side. If sleep habits change, the CPAP pressure may need adjusting. Some people need to change their sleeping position due to pain from a medical condition such as arthritis. A change in any drugs that you take to treat another illness may make your sleep apnoea worse. This can mean that you may need to adjust the pressure, or it may help to speak with your doctor about changing the time you take the drugs. Don't forget that expert help is available and you do not have to solve these issues by yourself.

What are the key messages to remember when using CPAP?

- Using **CPAP** means you can sleep **safely and well**.
- **You are in charge of the treatment** and can take off the mask and stop the machine at any chosen time. You are able to choose how far your therapy will go. Keep in mind that this treatment is the best option at this point in time and it only works when it is being used.
- **Get used to handling your mask** and feel comfortable with it. This is a vital part of learning to using CPAP. You could even put your CPAP mask on your face when you're doing things such as watching television. This will help you get used to having the mask on. Make CPAP a key part of your health, with the aim of turning it into just something that you need to do every night – like cleaning your teeth.
- A **ramp** is a useful device on most CPAP machines. It allows less pressure when you first turn on your machine. This will slowly build up to the pressure you need while you are falling asleep. A ramp may make it easier to use your CPAP machine on a nightly basis.
- There are **many options available on modern CPAP machines to help comfort**. Newer machines are quieter, smaller and equipped with ways to decrease the sensations of pressure. Some automatically adjust pressure throughout the night, seeking the lowest effective pressure for the type of sleep and body position you are in.
- There are **many styles of mask available** including some very small and lightweight models. Your CPAP supplier will help you choose the one that is best for you.
- **You may wake and find your mask is off**. This often happens for many CPAP users and it is a good approach to just accept this. What matters is what you do next. Put your mask back on and gently and slowly slide back into sleep as the CPAP works.
- **Taking a "night off" is not a good idea** because it can often lead to "two to three nights off". You may end up only using it one or two nights per week. This pattern of treatment is not good for your health or snoring!
- **Have realistic expectations** about using CPAP. To succeed with CPAP you may need to be patient and stick with it. CPAP will not "cure" all aspects of health problems but it will help you to feel so much better. You will be a safe sleeper at night. It will also mean you need to **"own" your equipment**, be responsible for it, and maybe seek help to work through technical problems that may come up. If you control your sleep apnoea with CPAP, you will enjoy a healthier life. See also [Travelling with CPAP](#).

Where can I find out more?

<http://www.metrohealth.org/body.cfm?id=1854&oTopID=1854>

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Sleep Health Foundation

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www.sleepoz.org.au

A voluntary group offering assistance and support to people and their families living with sleep disorders

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www.sleep.org.au

The peak national association of clinicians and scientists devoted to investigation of sleep and its disorders

Disclaimer - Information provided here is general in nature and should not be seen as a substitute for professional medical advice.

Ongoing concerns about sleep or other medical conditions should be discussed with your local doctor.

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Sleep Health Foundation ABN 91 138 737 854

114/30 Campbell Street, Blacktown NSW 2148

T: +61 (0) 2 8814 8655 F: +61 (0) 2 9672 3884