



## Can I travel with CPAP?

CPAP treatment for sleep apnoea may not be the most convenient thing to use. But it doesn't need to get in the way of your lifestyle. There are a number of things that can be done that you should know about. These let you travel, go camping and get out and about while still using your CPAP at night.

## Do I need to use CPAP every night?

When your doctor found you had sleep apnoea, you had probably already had it for a number of years. During this time, it wouldn't have been treated. One more night with no CPAP probably won't put you at risk. But you need to know that as soon as you stop using CPAP, your breathing during the night will get worse.

This means your daytime symptoms will come back. Think back to how things were before you started CPAP. There is a risk of going back to feeling this way. You may suffer from morning headaches and feel tired and moody during the day. Everyone is different, but these can come back after the first night with no CPAP.

Feeling tired during the day is a problem. This will raise your risk of road and other accidents. If you are driving for your holiday then this could be deadly. If you are tired, do not drive as you and others will be at risk.

## Important Things to Know About Travelling with CPAP

- You CAN travel while on CPAP
- Stopping CPAP for a day or two isn't the end of the world, but your sleep apnoea WILL come back
- There may be issues with running your CPAP machine off voltages used abroad
- There is a good chance airlines will let you use CPAP on a plane if you line things up in advance
- High altitude can make CPAP less effective. But it is still worth using it
- You may be able to run your CPAP machine off a battery for up to about 8 hours
- It is easy to damage CPAP machines in transit. Take care with them
- Some humidifiers can run off batteries. Others cannot
- It is dangerous to use oxygen while running CPAP off a battery
- If you aren't sure of something, talk with your supplier or doctor

## Can I use my CPAP in other countries?

Before going abroad you should talk to your sleep clinic or supplier of CPAP machines. You need to know how suitable the machine is for use in another country.

As a rule, most machines these days are able to run on other voltages, such as 110V in the United States without modification, as they have an inbuilt "switch mode" power supply. For some, you need to use a switch to adjust them, others adjust on their own. You must check this.

Some machines can't run on other voltages. In this case you might need to buy a transformer. Or you could hire a machine that works in the place you are going. If what you have now is suitable, don't forget adaptor plugs.

## Will the air pressure I get change in different countries?

This depends on the type of machine that you use. If you are at a higher altitude (e.g. the mountains), the air pressure around you is less. Some machines give less pressure in this case. Others will adjust to make up for this. How much pressure you need may vary too. This is due to how your sleep varies with altitude. In general the effects are quite small. It is better to use the CPAP, even if it is not at the best pressure, than not to use it.

## Can I use my CPAP on a ship or plane?

On a cruise ship or long haul flight, there will be power points. You can use these with most CPAP machines. You need to know what voltage you will be getting while on board. Consult with the airline or shipping line you are going with to find this out. Then talk with your clinic or supplier to make sure that the pump will work at this voltage.

As a rule, the airline will need a medical certificate from your doctor. They may also only let you use specific units on board the flight. Getting all this ready can take some time. This means it is best to start these well before the date you leave.

You might be worried about looking strange by using CPAP on the flight. If you are, then think about the alternative. This may be an extremely disrupted sleep with loud snoring. Both you and the other people on board would be far better off with a quiet CPAP machine.

## What should I watch out for when transporting my CPAP equipment?

Make sure your CPAP isn't damaged in transit. If it is your holiday may be difficult and unhappy. Even if you won't use your CPAP on the flight, take it on board as part of your hand baggage. Make sure that it is in a sturdy, protective bag. Airlines are used to people with medical equipment. Explain things to them. They will probably let you have this as another piece of cabin baggage.

To be even safer, you might want to get a letter explaining things. It is best if this is from a specialist doctor. You can use this if you run into any problems with customs or airlines. A lot of countries use languages other than English. If you are going to one of these, you should get these translated.

## Can I use my CPAP while camping?

If you will have access to normal mains power you should always use your CPAP. Some people worry about the air being much colder than at home. If you do, you should discuss this with your sleep clinic or supplier before you go. There are many simple things you can do to help. Running CPAP tubes under the bedclothes may be enough to warm the air. On the other hand, you may need a heated humidifier.

## Can I use my CPAP with a battery?

This needs some planning. You have to talk with your CPAP supplier well in advance of your holiday. Some newer CPAP machines can run straight from a battery. In this case you will only need the adaptor from car to CPAP machine. Others will work if you use a suitable inverter. This makes power from a battery (12V DC) into a form that is like normal mains power (240V AC). You should know that not all of them are the same. Some may be better than others for use with your CPAP machine. If you use the wrong one, it may shorten the life of the CPAP machine. This is because there is more stress on the motor. You must talk to the supplier of your CPAP to find out which inverters you need.

## How long will my CPAP run on a battery?

This depends a lot on the type of CPAP machine. It also depends on the pressure it gives. Older ones tend to use more power. When the pressure goes up, they use more power.

A modern CPAP machine can run off a car battery for at least about 8 hours. But take care not to be stuck with a flat battery. You might want a second battery if you can afford it. A deep cycle marine or recreational vehicle battery would be good. You can have this charging while you're driving. Talk to an auto electrician to set this up. In this way you will not be dependent on your CPAP battery to start the car. You can use mains power to recharge as well. For this you need a battery charger.

## Can I use a heated humidifier with a battery and inverter?

In general for older humidifiers this is NOT a good idea as they consume a lot of power. Some may not control how hot it is when you use an inverter. But there are newer units that can be used with an inverter.

If you feel you have to use one you should talk with your CPAP supplier before you try to use it with a battery. There may be other things you can try such as an unheated humidifier

## If I use oxygen with CPAP can I still use a battery power source?

Unfortunately, this is not a good idea. A spark from the equipment can cause a fire if oxygen is in use. If you use oxygen, even at night, you must talk with your specialist physician before doing things which might place you at risk e.g. camping.

### IMPORTANT - CHECK WITH YOUR CPAP SUPPLIER

Use of CPAP with other than normal mains voltage may pose special problems or risks. It may void your warranty. The supplier of your CPAP machine should always be consulted before using non-mains power supplies unless an approved battery and inverter.

This information is produced by:

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A national organisation devoted to education, advocacy and supporting research into sleep and its disorders

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

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

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