

CPAP Therapy Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is CPAP therapy?

CPAP stands for Continuous Positive Airway Pressure. A CPAP machine provides a constant airflow which holds the user's airway open, thus preventing apneas and allowing the user a restful sleep.

Does CPAP therapy require a prescription?

Yes, CPAP and BIPAP therapy along with supplies do require a prescription.

Can I change my own pressure?

No. Your doctor prescribed this machine with a specific pressure. If you feel that your machine's pressure needs to be changed, the doctor must prescribe a new pressure for you. Once a new pressure has been prescribed, contact your provider to have the pressure changed.

What are the CPAP masks made of?

Most CPAP masks are made of a silicone plastic. Most of the CPAP masks are made of hypoallergenic materials. The masks are not made of latex. Check with your manufacturer, they usually have a list of what each piece of your mask is made of.

What do I do if I have a cold?

Most people that get a cold can use the machine as long as they are comfortable, although some people will wait to use the machine until their cold subsides. If you do use the machine while having a cold or other illness, you should disinfect your supplies with a vinegar water solution, 3 parts water to 1 part distilled vinegar. Soak your supplies for about 30-45 minutes and then rinse and air dry.

I have cold like symptoms, am I allergic to the machine or mask?

No. If you have these symptoms you usually need more humidity to your nasal passage. A heated humidifier can take care of this problem. If you already have a humidifier, you may need to increase the level of humidity on your machine. Check your instruction manual that you received with the equipment. It usually has instructions that will tell you how to change the level of heat. If you are new to CPAP/BIPAP, your body may be getting used to the machine. Sometimes it can take up to 8 weeks for your body to get acclimated to using the equipment. Your body is adapting to the airflow into your nasal passages and sometimes they can get irritated which can cause cold like symptoms. Check with your doctor if your symptoms persist.

I feel suffocated. What's wrong?

There could be a lot of reasons why this could happen. If you have had a change in weight or have been on the machine for a long time, you may need to have the pressure increased. You may need a new sleep study to determine what your pressure should be changed to. Your doctor must write a new prescription for you to receive a pressure change. Another reason could be that there is a leak in your supplies, either your mask or tubing. Check all areas of your machine and supplies to make sure there are no leaks. If your supplies are more than 6 months old, your insurance company will sometimes pay for them to be replaced. Replacing your old supplies may help too.

Why is my humidifier not using water?

Most CPAP/BIPAP humidifiers work on relative humidity. The humidifier measures the amount of moisture in the air and pumps in additional moisture as necessary, based on the level your humidifier is set to. Most patients find that the humidifier uses less water during the warm, humid summer months and at the change of seasons. During the cooler, dryer winter months, the humidifier will use more water. If you are waking up with dry mouth or you have concerns that your humidifier may be malfunctioning. Please contact our office to speak to a technician if this is occurring.

What is heated tubing?

Heated tubing is a type of CPAP/BIPAP tubing that has an electrical coil built into the tubing for the PAP machine. It is beneficial because it is an extension of the very same process that the humidifier of the PAP machine uses to moisten the air. The heated tubing will warm the temperature of the air being blown through the machine so that it can carry more moisture from the humidifier. The heated tubing also reduces the risk of excess moisture building up in the tubing, also known as rain out. Heated tubing should never be used when Oxygen is bled into the CPAP.

Why is there water in my tubing?

Too much condensation can cause excess water in the tubing. This can be caused by the humidifier setting being too high or having your machine near a window or vent where cool air is coming out. Water in your tubing can also disrupt your therapy and can cause the pressure to lower, which can then disrupt your sleep. If you do get water in your tubing, you can lower the heat on the humidifier. Make sure the CPAP is about 1-2 inches lower than the mattress on your bed. This will usually keep the water trapped in your water chamber. Also make sure the tubing is dry before you start using the machine, to avoid any disruption in your sleep therapy.

My machine is spitting water out through my mask, is my humidifier broken?

This is a common occurrence, referred to as rain out. This happens when the humidifier is producing more moisture than the air flowing through the tubing can absorb. Rain out can also cause a "popping" noise in the tubing as the water droplets bounce around. Typically rain out is stopped by decreasing your humidifier setting. If decreasing the humidifier setting does not stop the excess water buildup, please contact our office to troubleshoot with a technician.

How long will my machine last?

There is no set time how long your machine will last. If the machine is maintained properly, (i.e. replacing/cleaning filters, changing supplies every 6-12 months) some machines have been known to last 12-14 years. Your machine typically has a 2 year warranty from the date you were set up with the equipment. Check with your provider as manufacturers may have different guidelines. Check with your insurance to see what their replacement policies are. Your insurance company may pay for a replacement if your machine is broken or it is no longer serviceable.

When will my insurance pay for a new machine?

Most insurances require that there be a "medically necessary" reason for the replacement of the CPAP machine. This can include your machine being broken beyond repair, obsolete, or the need for a different type of machine to properly treat your apnea, based on a doctor's prescription. Please contact our office to discuss your particular insurance requirements with our Customer Service Representatives.

When can I get new supplies for my machine?

Under most insurances patients are eligible for new supplies every 3-6 months. Please visit our patient support section for a more in-depth suggested replacement and cleaning schedule. Please check with your individual insurance plan for more information.

What are the supplies that need to be replaced?

The replaceable supplies for the PAP equipment include the mask, headgear, mask cushions, tubing, water chamber and air filters.

Why won't my mask connect to my tubing?

Every mask has a "quick disconnect" piece that tends to get stuck in the top of the tubing. This piece is usually 1-1.5 inches long and either white or grey in color. If this quick disconnect piece is in the top of the tubing, no other mask will be able to connect to the tubing. The top of your tubing is a pliable rubber that should be able to be pinched closed. If you cannot pinch the top of the tubing closed, this is an indication that there is a quick disconnect piece from your mask stuck.

Can I take my CPAP/BIPAP on a plane with me?

When traveling, we always suggest carrying on your CPAP/BIPAP equipment rather than packing it in your checked luggage. CPAP machines are considered medical devices covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act and do not count as one of your carry-on items. When going through TSA Security, you will have to remove your PAP machine from the carrying case and place it in a bin to go through x-ray screening (Your mask and tubing may stay in the carrying case). You may place your PAP device in a clear plastic bag prior to placing it in the bin for hygienic purposes. If your PAP machine needs to be swabbed for Explosive Trace Detection (ETD) test, you may request that the TSA agent performing the test change gloves and a new swab be used. For additional information on traveling with your PAP equipment, please contact your airline.

Can I use my CPAP/BIPAP machine in a country with a different voltage currency?

Yes, most PAP machines have a built in voltage adapter that will automatically convert to the different electrical currency. You will only need the wall adapter to plug the machine in.