

Treating obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA) with a CPAP machine

Respiratory Physiology and Sleep

Information for Patients

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What is obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA)?

OSA is when the top part of the throat narrows and closes during sleep. This causes a disruption to your breathing (apnoea). During this time air cannot get to the lungs so the oxygen level falls. The brain notices the fall in oxygen and partly wakes you up to start breathing again. This can happen many times a night. This disruption in your breathing is not dangerous. But each brief awakening needed to open the airway disrupts your sleep. Sleep may become so badly disturbed that it causes considerable sleepiness in the daytime.

What is the difference between snoring and OSA?

Snoring happens when air flowing through a narrowed airway makes it vibrate. Sucking air through a narrowed airway needs more effort so can disturb your sleep. Snoring often in the night can disturb your sleep and cause daytime sleepiness too. OSA is severe airway narrowing, snoring is a milder form of this. You may have snoring and no OSA, or both.

Treatment

We can treat OSA with continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP). This is used to treat the daytime sleepiness caused by OSA and snoring. OSA and snoring disrupt sleep by narrowing or closing off the airway. A CPAP machine blows air down the airway to stop this happening by holding the airway open.

We will give you another instruction leaflet with information on the type of CPAP machine you will have.

Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice

Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

What does the CPAP system consist of?

- CPAP is a breathing machine that draws in air from the room, and blows it out at higher pressure.
- The air comes from the machine, through a flexible tube, to a mask on your face.
- Soft straps hold the mask in place while you are asleep.

Setting up the CPAP

The machine is simple to use:

1. **Put the mask on:** There are different sizes and styles of mask available. We will fit the best mask to suit you when we give you the CPAP. All masks have a soft flexible cushion which rests on your face. It has a frame that the head straps attaches to. The easiest way to get the mask on is to hold the mask in place with one hand, then pass the straps over the head with the other. The straps should be adjusted so that the mask fits snugly against the face. This is to stop too much air leaking out.
2. **Attach the tubing:** You will need to attach a standard length of tubing to the CPAP machine. One end will be attached to the machine and the other end will be attached to the mask.
3. **Switch on the CPAP:** We prescribe settings from your sleep tests. We make sure you are comfortable. The CPAP will blow a continuous flow of air to hold your airway open.

Common problems

Soreness on the bridge of your nose: If you find that the bridge of your nose is becoming red and sore. Try wearing the mask with the straps a little looser. In the first week it is likely that you will have some redness as your skin gets used to the mask.

Air leaking from the mask: Put on the mask when the CPAP is switched off. Rest the mask on your face and make sure the cushion is not folded. Tighten the straps a little more and switch on the CPAP. A small leak from the mask is fine. Leaks into the eyes can cause them to become sore. If you cannot solve the leak you should contact the department.

Cold/ dry throat and nose: If this happens, you may want to keep your bedroom a little warmer. Try increasing the humidity by placing a tray of water over the radiator. It may also help to use a couple of drops of olive oil at the entrance to each nostril.

Runny nose/ sneezing: You can get irritation to the lining of the nose. You might find this gets better over time. If not there are nasal sprays that can help.

Blocked nose: If your nose becomes blocked overnight it may be hard to use the CPAP. A short course of a nasal spray may help.

Warm air from the CPAP: This often means that the filter is blocked. You will need to contact the department. Also make sure that the unit is away from bedclothes and curtains so the air can enter the machine.

Mouth leak (nasal mask use only): most people naturally keep their mouth closed when asleep. If your mouth is open when sleeping, try changing your sleeping position. Or you may need a chin strap from the department.

Routine care and maintenance

- **Once a day:** Wash the mask in warm soapy water. This is to remove any oils or grease from the skin.
- **Once a week:** Remove the straps from the mask and the tube from the mask and machine. Wash all 3 in warm soapy water. Rinse well and hang up to drip dry. The CPAP should be cleaned on the outside only. Disconnect from the mains supply and wipe over with a lightly damp cloth.

Can I travel abroad with the machine?

If you are travelling abroad the department can give you a letter to show to customs officials if they ask about your machine. If you are travelling by air, please remember the CPAP should always be carried as hand luggage and never stored in the hold. If you are travelling to the USA or Canada, check whether your CPAP is able to run from a 115 volt supply.

Please contact the department for advice if needed.

Follow-up appointments

After a trial period on the CPAP we may need to change the settings to help your breathing more. A follow-up appointment will be made for you to see a member of staff a few weeks after being given the CPAP machine. You can use this appointment to talk about any problems you may be having. If you are worried about anything to do with the CPAP, tubing or mask you should call the department and ask to be seen sooner.

If you need an appointment to see a sleep consultant, we will talk about this with you to see if it is needed and an appointment will be made for you. Always bring the CPAP, mains cable, mask and tubing with you so they can be checked at these appointments.

Contact details

Place sticker with contact details here:

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