



Dealing with a Dry Nose

One of the most common complaints of those using oxygen or other therapies delivering air to the nose (e.g., CPAP, Bi-level PAP, and NPPV) is dryness or congestion of the nose. Although not a serious complication of therapy, this problem can become enough of a nuisance that some will stop using the therapy. This problem can often be alleviated with a few simple steps, which are listed in order of preference starting with the simplest:



1. Try using nasal saline spray. Saline spray can be purchased inexpensively at any pharmacy. Because it contains no medicine, the spray can be used as often as needed to moisten the nose.
2. Special lotions or moisturizers are available specifically for oxygen users to apply to the nose. Your oxygen supplier may carry one of these products or provide information on where it can be obtained. You should never apply a petroleum-based product to the nose (e.g., Vaseline), as this increases the potential for a fire hazard. Make sure any product applied is water-based (e.g., K-Y Jelly).
3. Try adding humidity to the air in the room. When using a room humidifier, remember to clean it regularly to prevent the growth of bacteria and other germs.
4. Humidifiers can be attached directly to the therapy device. If adding a humidifier, clean it regularly as recommended to prevent infection.
5. Heated humidifiers can be used in severe dryness situations with CPAP or NPPV. By heating the air, it will hold more humidity. Condensation in the tubing can be a problem.

Consult a physician if humidity alone does not alleviate dryness or congestion. Medications are available to help treat nasal congestion but should only be used with the doctor's approval. The most commonly used preparations include decongestants, steroids, and antihistamines.

People with breathing problems, high blood pressure, or other chronic conditions should never use over-the-counter preparations of these medicines without their doctor's approval. Unwise use of these products can actually increase the problem over time.

Although a dry nose can be an aggravation, usually a few simple steps are all that is needed to overcome this problem and return to comfortable use of your important therapy.