Acclimating to CPAP Therapy—Helpful Tips

While some patients are able to easily adjust to wearing their CPAP device, many new users experience a period of acclimation or adjustment. After all, strapping a mask to your face and having air blow into your nose is not a natural way to sleep.

- Remember, using your CPAP will reduce or alleviate the nagging symptoms caused by sleep apnea. Studies have shown that the benefits of using a CPAP include:
  - Increased energy level and attentiveness
  - Fewer morning headaches
  - Reduced irritability
  - Improved memory
  - Less waking during the night to use the bathroom
  - Increased ability to exercise
  - Increased effectiveness at home or work
  - Improved overall quality of life
- Remember that using a CPAP reduces the risk of problems associated with sleep apnea including stroke, heart disease, depression, high blood pressure, and increased risk of automobile or work-related accidents.
- Early persistence pays off. Research has shown that if you are using your CPAP regularly after one week, you will most likely be using it after one year.
- Use a heated humidifier with your CPAP, as it has been shown to decrease nasal problems and mouth leaks while increasing compliance.
- If you have any problems tolerating the pressure, (especially when exhaling) or if your CPAP pressure is 12 or more, you may want to talk to your doctor about a possible

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change to a BiPAP. This device uses a lower pressure during exhalation and you may find it more comfortable.

- Many devices have a ‘ramp’ feature which allows you to start treatment at a lower pressure. As you fall asleep the pressure gradually increases up to your prescribed pressure.

- Some newer machines can reduce resistance when you exhale. If your device is several years old, your insurance may allow the purchase of a new device.

- Clean your mask, tubing, and headgear regularly and change them out as your insurance allows.

- Regularly clean and replace your CPAP filters. The reusable dark filter should be cleaned every week and replaced every six months. The white disposable filters should be replaced every two weeks. These filters help remove dust, pollen, mold, and other airborne particles that can cause irritation and allergies.

- Using a nasal saline spray, available at any pharmacy, may reduce mild nasal dryness.

- Talk with your doctor if nasal congestion continues. A nasal decongestant or steroid spray may be necessary but shouldn’t be used without your physician’s guidance.

- If your original mask doesn’t work well for you, talk to your supplier about other styles. Some users keep two different styles of masks and switch back and forth if one mask starts to cause soreness.

- The smallest mask size that fits without pinching your nostrils should be used.

- Don’t over-tighten your mask. Masks are designed to fit snugly, but not tight to the face. Over-tightening can cause leaks and soreness.

- When the mask is adjusted properly, it should sit parallel to the face when viewed from the side and not tilted in or out.

- You may want to consider looping the tubing over the headboard to reduce the pull on the mask.

- If you use a full face mask and wear dentures, remember that if your mask was fitted with your dentures in, the mask may not fit properly if worn without them.

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At Sleep Central, we are always ready and available to answer all your questions. Did you know Sleep Central has a Respiratory Clinician on staff 24 hours a day?

Issues with CPAPs and BiPAPs often arise just as you are ready to go to sleep, and sometimes in the middle of the night. We want you to know that Sleep Central is here for you! Simply pick up the phone and call our toll-free number 1-800-288-1853. Hold through the recording, and you will be connected to one of our clinicians... it’s that simple! We hope you never have a problem, but if you do, we’re here to help.