

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP)

What does the CPAP system consist of?

CPAP is a 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 that you have been loaned is simple to use:

1. Put the mask on - there are different styles and sizes of masks available. All consist of soft flexible cushioning which sits on your face.
2. Attach the tubing - a standard length of tubing is attached to the CPAP at one end and to your mask at the other.
3. Switch on the CPAP - the machine automatically provides the level of pressure you require when you have fallen asleep to maintain your airway.

Positioning the CPAP

Place the CPAP machine towards the top end of the bed on a bedside table or alternative furniture; this allows easy access to the on/off button. You will also find that this allows you to turn from side to side without disturbing the position of the mask.

Plug your CPAP in to the nearest plug to avoid trailing wires.

Common problems and their solutions

Soreness on the nasal bridge

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 not uncommon to have some redness as the skin becomes accustomed to having the mask in contact with it.

Soreness on the face

The same issue can also affect your face where the mask is in contact with it. Again, the same advice applies but if the skin becomes very inflamed and sore you should contact the department for advice.

Unable to get the mask to seal

The machine you have been loaned has a mask fit test option. To access this, go to 'MY OPTIONS' on the home screen menu.

Depress the round dial on the right of the screen and a sub-menu will appear. Select 'Run mask fit' by turning the dial to highlight it in blue. Ensure that your mask is positioned correctly on your face and depress the round dial to start test.

Allow for at least a minute for the pressure to build up to test for any mask leaks. Tighten mask appropriately. Take care not to over tighten the mask. This will distort the mask cushion creating further leaks and discomfort.

Dryness of the throat

Having a dry mouth at the start of your therapy is common.

Mouth breathing is a habit developed when you cannot breathe through your nose during sleep. This is further exacerbated by mask leaks as the moisture is taken away from your mask. This normally corrects once you become accustomed to CPAP.

Runny nose or sneezing

Air pushing into your nose can cause an irritation of the nasal lining that results in sneezing and a streaming nose, rather like hay fever or the start of a cold. You may find that it settles down on its own.

Nasal congestion

If your nose becomes blocked and congested during the night and you cannot use the CPAP, this is acceptable for a night or two. Restart your CPAP as soon as your symptoms are gone.

If the problem persists, then we can add a humidifier to the CPAP machine which produces water vapour to provide some relief from the congestion. Please contact the department to arrange this.

Routine care and maintenance

Wash your mask daily or after each use with warm water and a mild detergent and leave it to dry out of direct sunlight. This will help prevent leaks and prolong the life of the mask.

Handwash the headgear and tubing weekly in warm soapy water (headgear can be washed without being disassembled). Rinse well and squeeze the headgear to remove excess water. Air dry out of direct sunlight.

Unplug from the mains supply and wipe the CPAP externally with a damp cloth. Do not submerge CPAP in water.

Humidifier (if applicable)

The humidifier tub can be hand washed in warm water and mild detergent or washed in a dishwasher on a delicate glassware cycle (top shelf only). Dishwasher temperature must not exceed 65°C.

Travelling

If you are travelling abroad, the department can provide a letter to show customs officials should they ask about your machine.

Please remember when travelling by air the CPAP machine must be carried onboard as hand luggage and never stored in the hold (check with your air carrier prior to booking your flight to see if this is free of charge).

For long haul flights, please check with the airline to see if they are CPAP-friendly and allow the use of CPAP on board.

You will also need a 3-pin plug adaptor to use abroad.

Hospital stays

Take your CPAP into hospital with you if you are admitted for any inpatient stay. The wards may not have any machines available for you to use. Use your CPAP in the usual way when sleeping.

If you are having an operation, please let your anaesthetist and surgeon know that you are using CPAP for obstructive sleep apnoea. Have the CPAP available for use during sedation and after your operation. Provide a copy of your diagnosis letter if you have it.

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

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