

# Common Questions and Answers about CPAP Treatment



*If you have had a previous diagnostic sleep study, or polysomnogram (PSG) and the results of that study confirmed the diagnosis of obstructive sleep apnea, and your physician ordered CPAP treatment, this information will help you understand what you will now need to do to get the treatment you need. If you still have questions, please give us a call.*

## **Why Does Sleep Apnea Require Treatment?**

Sleep apnea is well known to fragment sleep and cause daytime sleepiness. Untreated sleep apnea puts significant stress on the heart, lungs, and blood pressure. If left untreated for many years, sleep apnea significantly increases the risk of stroke, heart attack and high blood pressure. Obstructive Sleep Apnea is one of the loudest “silent killers” known to medicine. In addition, the symptoms of daytime sleepiness have been associated with an increased number of automobile accidents.

## **How Does CPAP Work?**

Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) is a highly effective therapy that uses air pressure to prop the upper airway open during sleep, thus preventing the upper airway from collapsing. CPAP machines work by pumping room air through a compressor that is connected by a hose to a mask that is worn over or against the nose.

## **What Does The CPAP Equipment Consist of?**

The CPAP apparatus consists of a nasal mask, headgear that holds the mask in place, a flexible hose that moves air from the CPAP machine to the mask, and the CPAP machine itself. Current CPAP models are small, lightweight and portable, making travel with the machine easy.

## **Why Do I Have To Come To The Sleep Laboratory In Order To Use The CPAP?**

CPAP machines can administer a variety of different pressures and we don't know which pressure level will successfully keep your airway open during sleep and prevent apneas from occurring. Only in the sleep laboratory can we try different pressure levels during your sleep to see which one works best. This will ensure you receive the best treatment using CPAP therapy at home.

## **How Is The Best CPAP Pressure Determined?**

During the CPAP treatment trial, the technician on duty will monitor your breathing and changes in your heart, brain, etc. If you show continuing signs of sleep apnea, the pressure will be adjusted until the apnea and related changes in breathing are significantly reduced. Following your CPAP treatment trial, the data from the sleep study is reviewed to determine the treatment recommendations for you.

## **Is There Only One Type Of Mask?**

There are many varieties of CPAP masks and devices. The technician will start you out with the mask type that you find most comfortable. This can change during testing and a different type of mask can be tried.

## **Can I Breathe Through My Mouth?**

As the name of the device suggests, it is very important to breathe through your nose at all times. Usually people do breathe through their nose once they are asleep. Sometimes, it is difficult to exhale initially when using CPAP. You should resist the temptation to breathe through your mouth. If mouth breathing is a problem, sometimes a chinstrap or full-face mask may be used.

## **Why Do You Have To Attach All The Same Sensors And Electrodes I Had During My First Sleep Study?**

Almost all the electrodes and sensors you had on the first sleep study are attached again because only with these electrodes can we tell if you are asleep and breathing with CPAP treatment.

## **Are The Procedures Any Different During The CPAP Trial Than For The Diagnostic Sleep Study?**

Procedures are almost identical except for the placement of the nasal mask, measurement of pressure in the mask, and adjustments to the pressure made during sleep by the technical staff.

## **How Will I Know If The CPAP Treatment Trial Was Successful?**

Most patients know immediately that the CPAP treatment was successful because they slept better and awakened feeling more alert than usual. Sometimes it takes several nights of CPAP use at home before patients begin to feel better. While most patients do well with CPAP therapy, a few may experience symptoms such as dryness in the nose or feelings of claustrophobia. These and other problems can be overcome with a few adjustments.

## **What Time Is The Study Over?**

Similar to your first sleep study, the technician will wake you between 5:00 and 6:00a.m, depending on your bedtime. If you need to be up earlier, please notify the technician. The technician will remove all leads and sensors. There will be some short questionnaires to fill out. As soon as you are unhooked, you are free to leave. Some patients bring their clothing for the next day and leave directly for work. Not all locations have shower facilities, so if you wish to shower, please check with scheduling staff ahead of time.

## **How And When Do I Get The Results?**

All sleep studies contain 1,000 pages or more of data that must be analyzed and interpreted. Analyzing a sleep study is a time consuming process. Each 30 second page of the recording is examined for sleep stage, breathing abnormalities, cardiac arrhythmias, movements, arousals, and many other variables. Often the technician must review the same page of data 3 or 4 times to identify all significant data. The fully analyzed data is then reviewed by a certified sleep specialist who will provide an interpretation (what it actually means). This information is entered into the final sleep study report and prepared for your doctor. This process usually takes at least two weeks. Results will be faxed and mailed to the physician who ordered the sleep study for you. Please contact your physician for the results and follow-up for treatment recommendations.

## **CPAP At Home?**

After your CPAP trial, if the CPAP was objectively successful – it treated your sleep apnea – your physician may prescribe a home CPAP unit for your use. Your physician will then forward the prescription to a provider who is contracted with your insurance company, or instruct you on how to do so. Sleep Services of America can provide CPAP equipment for a variety of insurance companies, and can also make payment arrangements if you do not have insurance coverage.

## **How Is The CPAP Machine Paid For?**

Getting used to sleeping with a CPAP machine takes time. While at first you may find it inconvenient and troublesome, you shouldn't abandon it without a good try. The first month on therapy is the most critical month and you should make every attempt to use it all night, every night. Sleep Services of America considers the first month, the "trial month". Unless you or your insurance company requires a different arrangement, SSA will rent the CPAP to you during this trial month. Most symptoms or problems that patients experience as a result of this new therapy are remedied during the first month. For your sake, we hope that you will decide to continue with therapy after the trial period. Reimbursement for the CPAP machine and supplies varies by insurance company and specific plan. Therefore, we suggest that you contact your insurance company and inquire about your Durable Medical Equipment (DME) benefits.

## **What If I Have A Problem With My CPAP Machine At Home?**

You may call your DME (Durable Medical Equipment) provider, or your physician.

## **Can I Travel With This Machine?**

Most CPAP machines available today come equipped with transformers, which allow them to be used with international (220v) voltages when you travel to foreign countries. A travel case for the device and accessories often come with the machine or can be purchased from the manufacturer. A battery power option is available for those who camp. High altitudes can affect the performance of your CPAP machine. You should consult your physician if your travel plans call for sleep at altitudes much higher or lower than those at home.