

## ABOUT SLEEP DISORDERS AUSTRALIA

*Sleep Disorders Australia (SDA)* is a voluntary Not-for-Profit organisation that provides information and offers support and assistance to people affected by sleep disorders throughout Australia. SDA advocates for the needs of people with sleep disorders and raises awareness of sleep disorders and the significance they can have on the lives of those affected by them. We also provide support and education with regards to the prevention and treatment of sleep disorders.

We would be delighted if you would join us. Membership is available to all sufferers, members of their family, medical professionals, and any member of the public who has an interest in the area of sleep disorders. You can join SDA via our website. For more information you can email our membership officer.

If you would like to support us with a donation. You can donate via our website or you can send a cheque to our address.

## CONTACT INFO

-  [www.sleepoz.org.au](http://www.sleepoz.org.au)
-  [admin@sleepoz.org.au](mailto:admin@sleepoz.org.au)
-  Sleep Disorders Australia  
PO Box 5278 Algester Qld 4115
-  Find us on facebook
-  Follow us on twitter

©2019 Sleep Disorders Australia

## CLEANING YOUR CPAP

Regular cleaning of your CPAP machine and its components is important for the function and longevity of your equipment. Please note that these guidelines should NOT replace the instructions supplied by your equipment manufacturer.

### HEAD STRAPS

Head straps should be washed once a week. Wash by hand using warm soapy water, rinse thoroughly and squeeze out excess water. Leave to dry away from direct sunlight.

### MASKS

Ideally, your mask should be cleaned every morning. Wash the mask in warm (not hot) soapy water, avoiding detergents and bleaches as these may damage your mask. Rinse the mask of soapy residue, shake of excess water and leave it to dry.

### TUBING

When using a humidifier, tubing should be rinsed with water each day and then hung up to drip-dry. If you don't use a humidifier, rinse the tubing monthly.

### FILTERS

All CPAP machines have dust filters which must be cleaned and/or changed periodically. It is recommended that you check your filter every two weeks and clean it if necessary, according to your manufacturer's instructions (often vacuum or rinsing are suggested).

The filter should be replaced at least every six months, or more often if you live in a dusty environment.

### HUMIDIFIERS

The humidifier chambers should be emptied each day, rinsed and left to dry.

### WATER FOR YOUR HUMIDIFIER

Manufacturers recommend using Distilled Water because it contains no impurities. Do not use tap water. Tap water can contain chemicals and particles that will settle on the bottom of the water chamber. If not cleaned regularly, this sediment will be hard to remove and will cause premature aging of the metal heating plate. If you have not been using Distilled Water you may notice a buildup of sediment on the bottom of the water tank. Try cleaning the chamber with a white vinegar and water solution, then rinse with clear water and air dry. This routine will help remove any residue and disinfect the water chamber. Never use antibacterial soaps, bleach or other harsh chemicals in the water chamber.

**DISCLAIMER:** Information provided in this fact sheet is general in content and should not be seen as a substitute for professional medical advice. Concerns over sleep or other medical conditions should be discussed with your family doctor.





# HOW CPAP WORKS

## WHAT IS CPAP?

If you suffer from **severe** sleep apnea then CPAP or Continuous Positive Airway Pressure is the most successful treatment.

## HOW DOES CPAP WORK?

CPAP is a very simple mechanical aid to help keep the airway open. In sleep apnea repeated collapse of the airway in the throat stops you breathing and leads to problems such as lack of oxygen, disrupted sleep and the increased risk of stroke and heart attack. CPAP prevents the airway closing by keeping a positive pressure inside the airway, a bit like blowing up a bicycle inner-tube that has become deflated. This pressure is created by blowing air through the nose and into the upper airways using a CPAP machine. This pressure is applied continuously throughout

the night to prevent the airways closing. Hence the name: Continuous Positive Airway Pressure. The air flow is generated by a pump or blower that is small, quiet and extremely reliable. CPAP usually plugs into your power point but many are also able to operate from a battery.

## HOW IS THE PRESSURE APPLIED TO THE AIRWAY?

The most commonly used method for applying the pressure is by the use of a soft mask that is shaped to seal against the face or into the nose. Masks may fit over the nose only or both nose and mouth (for mouth breathers). Getting a satisfactory fit of the mask to the face is the most difficult part of CPAP treatment. Although masks have improved dramatically over the years, a number of people still have difficulty adapting to them and it is really important that you find a mask that suits you.

## WHAT IS HUMIDIFICATION?

Most CPAP machines are able to be used with a humidifier which is a device that warms and adds moisture to the air you breathe making it more comfortable.

## HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO WORK?

CPAP works immediately in stopping your sleep apnea. Some people notice immediate improvement in their daytime symptoms, such as tiredness, but others find it takes some time to get used to CPAP and gain maximum benefit.

## HOW LONG WILL I NEED TO USE CPAP?

CPAP only works when you wear it. It doesn't cure sleep apnea. It only controls the symptoms by keeping the airway open. If you stop using CPAP your airway will once again close and you will experience apnea. If it's not being used, it's not being effective.

## DO I NEED TO USE CPAP EVERY NIGHT?

When you were diagnosed with sleep apnea, you had been untreated for years. When you stop using CPAP your apnea will return as will your daytime symptoms. You may experience morning headaches, daytime tiredness and irritability similar to that you experienced before starting CPAP. If you have a cold or flu you may be advised not to use your CPAP while nasal symptoms are severe.

## WHAT ARE THE MAIN SIDE EFFECTS OF CPAP TREATMENT?

CPAP is a very safe treatment with few serious side effects. The most common is nasal irritation due to the air blowing into the nose. A mouth leak makes this nasal irritation much worse. CPAP users sometimes complain of cold, painful or stuffy noses. Other side effects are associated with the mask rubbing on the nose or with air blowing into the eyes from a poorly fitting mask.

# TRAVELING WITH YOUR CPAP

## CAN I TAKE MY CPAP OVERSEAS?

Most CPAP machines are able to operate on other voltages, such as 110V, some adjust automatically, others have a switch. If your machine cannot operate at different voltages you can purchase a transformer or hire a machine able to operate overseas. Remember the power adaptor plugs.

## WILL THE PRESSURE DELIVERED CHANGE IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES?

This is dependent on the type of machine that you use. Some machines deliver less pressure if the air pressure is less, for example if you are at a higher altitude than at home (e.g. the mountains). Other machines will adjust for this effect.

## CAN I USE MY CPAP ON A SHIP OR PLANE?

Consult with the airline or ship to find out the voltage that is available and then confirm with your CPAP supplier that your pump will operate at this voltage. The airline will generally require

a medical certificate and may only approve the use of specific units during flight. As these arrangements with airlines can take some time it is best to commence these well before the date of departure. If you are worried about being conspicuous in the use of CPAP on the flight you should consider the alternative - an oral appliance or a mandibular advancement splint which fits completely in your mouth so no-one knows you are wearing it. It also doesn't require power or a medical certificate and may be a suitable option for your travel without needing to arrange anything with your airline.

## ARE THERE ANY PRECAUTIONS TO TAKE WHEN TRANSPORTING MY CPAP EQUIPMENT?

Even if you are not using your CPAP during the flight, take your CPAP as hand baggage. If you have a medical certificate, it may be allowed as an additional piece. If you are going to a non-English speaking country, get your medical certificate translated.

## CAN I USE MY CPAP WHILE CAMPING?

Some machines operate on 12 VDC so they can be used while camping. If the environment is colder than your bedroom, you can run CPAP tubes under the bedclothes to warm the air or consider hire or purchase of a heated humidifier.

## CAN I USE MY CPAP WITH A BATTERY?

Some newer CPAP machines are able to operate directly from a battery in which case you will only need the adaptor from car to CPAP machine. Other machines will operate if a suitable inverter is used.

## HOW LONG WILL MY CPAP RUN ON A BATTERY?

A car battery will operate a modern CPAP machine (through an inverter) for at least 8 hours. However, it is important that if you are dependent on that battery to start your car in the morning, you check this out before finding yourself stuck with a flat battery. If you can afford to buy a second

battery, a deep cycle marine or recreational vehicle battery will work. An auto electrician could arrange for this to be charged from your car's alternator while traveling. A battery charger may also be a good investment for those times when you can use mains power to recharge the battery.

## CAN I USE A HEATED HUMIDIFIER WITH A BATTERY AND INVERTER?

For older humidifiers this is generally not recommended. Some may not control the temperature when operating from an inverter. Newer units can be used with an inverter. There may be other options such as an unheated humidifier or the use of a low wattage infra-red globe to warm the inspired air.

## IF I USE OXYGEN WITH CPAP CAN I STILL USE A BATTERY POWER SOURCE?

No. Any minor spark from the equipment can cause a fire if oxygen is in use. If you are dependent on oxygen, consult your specialist before any activity which might place you at risk.

