

## Helpful hints for your CPAP unit

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The following provides some possible remedies for common problems related to the CPAP unit—the continuous positive airway pressure machine.

### **Dry Eyes**

Dry eyes may occur when your mask leaks air or if air flows through a small duct that drains your tears.

- Make sure your mask makes a tight seal around your face. This may require loosening the mask straps to eliminate the folds in the inner membrane.
- Use artificial tears eye drops in each eye before going to bed and after waking up.

### **Dry Nose**

One of the functions of your nose is to increase the amount of moisture in the air that you breathe into your lungs. When large volumes of air pass through your nostrils, your nose may dry out and become very irritated. You may also get a sore throat.

- Your machine should incorporate a humidifier which increases the moisture content of the air from your CPAP machine. Be sure to use only distilled water and change it as instructed. If you do not have a humidifier, contact your home health company.
- Use nasal salt solution sprays such as Ocean Spray four times per day. Do not use medicated decongestants since they will only make your nose worse.
- Sometimes applying Vaseline to the inside rim of your nose may reduce the soreness. Petroleum-based products will damage the mask so avoid direct contact.
- If you have forced-air heating in your home, a humidifier will help increase the moisture levels during the winter.
- Heated humidifiers can deliver extra moisture.

### **Stuffy Nose**

A stuffy nose may indicate that the tissue inside the nose has become swollen due to dryness, an allergy or a cold.

- Make sure the air intake of CPAP machine is clean and not near a dusty or moldy environment.
- Get a humidifier for your machine.
- Change the filter on your machine.
- Change the humidifier water, clean the humidifier and tubing, and rinse with distilled water.

- Use nasal salt sprays four times per day.
- If you have a cold, you may wish to use an over-the-counter decongestant for a short period of time. Note that most of these medications lose their effectiveness when used for over a week.
- If the stuffiness persists, you should consult your doctor.

### **Dry Mouth**

If you sleep with your mouth open, you may wake up with a dry mouth since the air being pushed in through your nose is coming out your mouth and not holding your throat open. This means you are not receiving the benefit of the CPAP machine.

- Ask your home health care company to send you a chin strap for your head gear.
- Football teeth guards or protectors that you can mold to fit both your top and bottom teeth may help. There should be no hole in the middle to breath through.
- Use the humidifier included with your CPAP machine.
- Try taping your lips with 2-inch medical paper tape or transpore tape.

### **Skin Irritation**

If your mask or head gear is too tight, you may receive some rub marks, especially on the bridge of your nose. For people who require high CPAP pressures, the tightness may be unavoidable. A poorly cleaned mask or residual soap may also irritate your skin.

- Skin protectors or patches like those sold for tender areas on your feet may be placed on the head gear or mask to reduce the pressure on the irritated area.
- Make sure to use a skin moisturizer to keep the skin from cracking or peeling.
- Clean the mask and head gear regularly, making sure that all of the soap is rinsed off thoroughly with distilled water.
- Foam spacers may provide some relief of pressure to the skin.
- Use a soft series mask or a bubble mask.

### **Leaking Face Mask**

Your mask may leak air, or you might have difficulty getting a good seal around the mask. This happens when your mask does not fit properly or the head gear does not hold the mask on tight.

- Tighten or loosen the head gear to get a good seal with the mask.
- Make sure your mask fits properly and is comfortable. If not, ask your home health company to refit you with another mask.
- Once you find a comfortable position for your sealed mask, mark the strap position with colored thread. This will remind you how tight your straps need to be in order to get a good seal. This position may change over time.

### **Tube Pulling on the Mask**

The tube that connects the CPAP machine to the mask can break the seal of the mask if pulled when you move from side to side. In addition, some people find they cannot get comfortable with the tube on the bed.

- Buy an extension arm light that swivels at the base. You should take the light off of the arm, attach the extension arm to the head of your bed over your pillow so that it can rotate from the left to right side of your bed. Attach one end of a flexible stretch cord to the end of the extension arm and the other end of the cord around the CPAP tubing. Be sure to allow enough slack to give you free motion when moving from side to side without having the tubing resting on the bed.

### **Traveling with your CPAP machine**

- Always carry the CPAP machine as a carry-on bag.
- Make sure to carry an extension cord and the correct adapter plug.
- Carry a 3-prong plug and an adapter that converts to a 2-prong plug.
- Carry extra fuses (if needed).
- Keep a copy of your CPAP prescription for any repairs or replacement parts.
- Have access to purified or distilled water for humidification CPAP units.
- If traveling by car, keep the CPAP machine in the passenger compartment rather than in the trunk to minimize temperature extremes.
- If traveling by car, camper, motor home, or boat, consider taking a 12-volt adapter for operating the CPAP from a cigarette lighter plug. NEVER use CPAP when the motor engine is running.
- If traveling to higher altitudes, you may need to adjust the pressure setting.