

# The Penn Sleep Centers

## FAQs

### Obstructive sleep apnea/CPAP basics

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#### **How often do I need to use CPAP?**

CPAP works best when used with all sleep, including naps. CPAP therapy only works while you are actively using it; it cannot prevent breathing pauses from happening in the future. As a result, it is important not to skip any nights on CPAP and to use CPAP for the entire time you are asleep.

#### **Do I need to use CPAP when I travel?**

Yes, it is important to bring CPAP with you when you travel. If you travel outside of the United States, you may need an electrical adapter. If you travel to an unusually high altitude for a period of time, your CPAP pressure may need a temporary adjustment. When flying, you should take your CPAP unit as a carry-on item, but it should not count towards your carry-on allotment. Airport security personnel should be familiar with CPAP equipment.

#### **Should I use CPAP when I am sick?**

In almost all cases, you can – and should – keep using CPAP when you are sick. If you have a nasal or nasal pillow mask and are having trouble breathing through your nose due to a cold or allergies, you may need to switch to a full face mask until you are better. Talk to your Sleep doctor or primary care provider to see if you can take a decongestant or another type of medication to improve your nasal symptoms. Once you are well again, make sure to clean all of your CPAP equipment in a diluted vinegar solution to kill any remaining germs.

#### **Will I have to use CPAP forever?**

Most people prescribed CPAP therapy for obstructive sleep apnea will need to use CPAP for the rest of their lives. However, some people who have lost a lot of weight, such as through bariatric surgery, may no longer need CPAP. Other people may no longer need CPAP after having surgery on their upper airway. In these cases, a sleep study is performed to make sure CPAP is no longer needed. Please talk to your Sleep doctor if you think you may no longer need CPAP.



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### **What will happen if I do not treat my obstructive sleep apnea?**

Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) involves breathing pauses in your sleep. These pauses can last from 10 seconds to a minute or even longer. Someone with OSA can have hundreds of these breathing pauses each night.

These breathing pauses can cause dramatic changes in your blood pressure and oxygen levels while you sleep, placing a lot of stress on your body. Over time, if left untreated, OSA can increase your risk for a number of serious health problems, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, diabetes and obesity.

The good news is that OSA can be treated with a high rate of success. CPAP therapy has been shown to be a very effective treatment for OSA.

Source: Eight Health Risks of OSA. 2008. Retrieved July 14, 2009 from [www.sleepeducation.com](http://www.sleepeducation.com)

### **Are there alternative treatments to CPAP therapy?**

CPAP therapy is often the best treatment for obstructive sleep apnea. However, there are some alternative treatments, including weight loss, positional therapy, oral appliances and upper airway surgery. If you are interested in any of these alternative treatments, please tell your Sleep doctor.

### **I no longer want to use CPAP. What do I do?**

Your Sleep doctor has prescribed CPAP therapy as a treatment for your obstructive sleep apnea, just as s/he might prescribe a medication for high blood pressure or other medical problem. Failing to treat OSA can lead to serious health problems. Before you stop CPAP, you need to talk with your Sleep doctor about your problems with CPAP and discuss alternative treatments, if appropriate. CPAP units cannot be returned to the Penn Sleep Center under any circumstances. In addition, you cannot return your CPAP unit to your home care company without an order from your Sleep doctor. In some cases, your doctor may ask you to sign a document stating that you understand you are stopping CPAP against medical advice. The first step is to make an appointment with your Sleep doctor by call the Penn Sleep Center (215.662.7772).



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### Sleep studies and CPAP start-up

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#### **How is it determined which mask I receive?**

In most cases, you will be ordered the mask that you found to be most comfortable during your CPAP titration study. If you breathe through your mouth when you sleep, you will probably need a full-face mask, which covers your nose and your mouth. If you are able to keep your mouth closed when you sleep, you can also use a nasal or nasal pillow mask. Visit our CPAP Clinic to see different mask options.

### CPAP equipment and billing

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#### **How often can I get a new CPAP machine?**

If taken good care of, CPAP machines can last as long as 5-10 years. Insurance rules for replacing CPAP units can vary. Please contact your home care company if you think you need a new CPAP unit.

#### **I want to buy a second CPAP unit for travel/my second home. How do I do this and how much do they cost?**

There are many brands and models of CPAP units that can be used for travel and/or a second home. Basic units start at \$200-\$300, with extra costs for humidifiers, smartcards and other added features. There are many internet sites that sell CPAP units and supplies. You will usually need a prescription from your Sleep doctor to buy a CPAP unit. Please tell your Sleep doctor/nurse if you would like to buy a CPAP unit.

#### **I want to change masks. How do I do this?**

Call your home care company to see when you are due for a new mask. Your home care company will then ask your Sleep doctor for a prescription. Most home care companies will send you your new mask in the mail. It usually takes about 7-10 business days to get your CPAP mask once you've placed your order. You may want to come into our CPAP Clinic to be fit for your new mask, or to see different mask options.

#### **I don't understand my bill for my CPAP unit. Who can I ask about this?**

CPAP units are usually rented monthly and converted to a sale after a certain number of months, depending on your insurance plan. Contact your home care company for any billing questions.



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### **I got a letter from my home care company with new insurance rules for CPAP.**

#### **What do I need to do?**

Some insurance plans, including Medicare, now require that patients starting on Positive Airway Pressure (PAP) therapy (CPAP, Bilevel and ASV) have a follow-up appointment with their Sleep doctor or nurse within 30-90 days of starting PAP therapy. These rules also state that you must use your PAP unit 70% of nights, for at least 4 hours per night, during a consecutive 30-day period in order to continue receiving coverage for PAP therapy. Coverage for PAP units can be denied if these requirements are not met, and you can be responsible for the cost of your PAP unit and supplies. The first step is to make an appointment with your Sleep doctor or nurse practitioner by calling the Penn Sleep Center (215.662.7772). Make sure to bring your PAP smartcard to this appointment.

## CPAP Smartcards

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### **Why does my smartcard beep when I insert it into my CPAP unit?**

See your CPAP manual or call your home care company to make sure your card is inserted correctly. If your card is still beeping, please call our CPAP Coordinator (215.615.4836) for a replacement.

### **My smartcard is lost/damaged. How do I get a new one?**

Please call your home care company to get a new smartcard.

### **How much data will my smartcard hold?**

Most smartcards will hold more than six months worth of data.

### **What if my CPAP unit does not have a smartcard?**

Ask your home care company if you can switch to a CPAP unit with a smartcard. If you cannot, that's ok. Smartcards are helpful, but you can still get effective CPAP treatment without one.