

# ALABAMA NEUROLOGY & SLEEP MEDICINE

## CPAP and Obstructive Sleep Apnea

### **CPAP: Treating obstructive sleep apnea**

Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) is the most common therapy for obstructive sleep apnea. Patients wear a mask during sleep. The mask is connected to a machine which provides air pressure to keep the airway open.

### **Does insurance to cover the CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machine?**

Most insurance policies cover CPAP. CPAP is considered to be durable medical equipment (DME). You can call your insurer to find out the specifics of your coverage. Deductibles and copayments for medical equipment may be different from what you pay for office visits or prescriptions.

### **How long does it take to get the machine?**

It can take 7-10 days to get a CPAP machine from a DME provider because of the paperwork required for insurance purposes.

### **What kind of mask should I get for my CPAP?**

Nasal pillow systems, nasal masks and full face masks are available in many shapes, sizes and styles from a variety of vendors. They can all be effective. On the night of a CPAP titration study (similar to the sleep study), the technologist will help you select a mask and then fit the mask system. Patients should try to keep an open mind about the possibilities and pick the mask that seems to fit well and cause the fewest problems. You should pick a first and second choice and let the technologist know if the mask is uncomfortable during the night so a change can be made.

### **What should I do if my nose is runny or I have a dry mouth after using the CPAP?**

Humidification of the air in your CPAP system can be extremely helpful in managing both dry mouth and runny nose. CPAP systems include a humidifier. Studies have shown improved comfort and increased use when the humidifier is used. The humidity settings may need to be adjusted. If problems persist, contact the office.

### **What if I'm having trouble breathing?**

Every patient is different and some take longer than others to adjust to CPAP. High CPAP pressures may be uncomfortable initially and low settings may create a sensation of being "air starved." Contact your DME provider to check the accuracy of your equipment and discuss the problem with your sleep specialist so they can determine if a pressure adjustment is required.

### **How do I clean my CPAP?**

Each machine has specific cleaning/maintenance instructions, which will be reviewed by the DME provider.

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## **How long do I have to wear my CPAP each night for it to be effective?**

Studies show that at least 6 hours of CPAP usage per night is needed to reduce the long-term health risks of obstructive sleep apnea. We encourage our patients to put the CPAP on at bedtime and wear the system whenever sleeping. You should make every attempt to put the mask back on after nighttime awakenings. If you awaken frequently or if you find your mask on the floor in the morning, then pressure adjustment or a mask refitting may be necessary.

## **Compliance**

Medicare and some other insurers require that the use of the CPAP system be monitored and documented. Adequate use of the system is called compliance. In order to have the system covered by these insurance carriers, patients must prove compliance by using the system at least 4 hours nightly for 30 consecutive days out of the first 90 days of use. If you meet compliance at any time within that 90 day period, Dr. Geyer's office will contact you to set up an appointment to complete the compliance requirements. If you are having trouble using the system and are not able to use the system as required, please contact the office.

## **CPAP supplies**

You may get a new mask, hose, and supplies periodically. Ask your DME supplier how often your insurance will cover supplies. Your prescription for these supplies will last for 1 year.

## **What should I do if I am still tired or sleepy despite using my CPAP nightly?**

If sleepiness has not resolved after you have been on CPAP for 6 weeks, then there are several possible explanations:

- An increase in pressure may be needed.
- If you have had longstanding severe sleep apnea, especially when you have experienced significant episodes of low oxygen levels at night, you may take a longer time to improve. These symptoms should be discussed with your sleep specialist.
- You just might not be allocating enough time for sleep. 7-9 hours of sleep are recommended for optimal results. CPAP is not a substitute for adequate sleep.
- Some individuals with obstructive sleep apnea may also have other underlying medical conditions. A check-up with your primary care doctor is always helpful.
- Inspection of CPAP equipment is important to confirm that there is nothing wrong with the device.

It is important to make an appointment to see your sleep doctor to identify possible causes.