



Night Time
MEDICAL

CPAP Masks: Types, Problems, and Replacements



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What Is a Sleep Apnea Mask (CPAP Mask)?



If you are diagnosed with sleep apnea, a sleep specialist may prescribe CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) therapy. After your diagnosis, you'll be provided three components that work together to help you breathe: a box, tubing, and a mask. A CPAP mask, or sleep apnea mask, is the part of your CPAP machine that secures to your face.

Though [styles of sleep apnea/CPAP masks](#) vary, all share a few common features:

- **Headgear.** All masks require some sort of headgear, including straps, to secure them in place. A proper CPAP fitting session with a technician is important so you learn how to secure your headgear without overtightening, which can leave marks on your face. Headgear can also include optional support accessories – for example, an attachable chin support to keep the mouth closed while you're sleeping. A chin support can reduce oral breathing (mouth breathing), which in some cases may diminish the effectiveness of your [sleep apnea therapy](#).

- **Tubing.** All CPAP masks come with a length of tubing that attaches to the box on one end. The other end of the tubing secures to your mask, delivering continuous air pressure. Tubing is usually six feet long so you can make around in your sleep.
- **Ports.** All apnea masks have ports that allow for the release of exhaled carbon dioxide. Some masks also include ports for patients who may need supplemental oxygen as they sleep.
- **Cushioning.** To make the fit as comfortable as possible and to reduce skin irritation, all sleep apnea masks are cushioned in the spots where the mask comes into contact with the face. This cushioning also improves the seal, minimizing air leaks. Cushioning is medical-grade and latex-free. It's also replaceable, meaning you can [order new cushioning \(or other replaceable CPAP parts\)](#) when it wears out.

How to Fit a CPAP Mask (and Why it Matters)

Proper fit and comfort are crucial to CPAP therapy. If your mask is uncomfortable in any way or makes you feel claustrophobic, you'll stop using it. After your sleep test and apnea diagnosis, a sleep technician who knows how to fit a CPAP mask will help you to choose the right mask for your needs and for your face and nose shape.

Comfort is crucial, but fit is also important to create a tight seal. A loose seal can leak pressurized air, which works against the purpose of your apnea therapy. Leaking air can also contribute to dry or irritated eyes or excess noise when you're sleeping, which may disturb you, your bed partner, or other people in your household.



The right mask is a very important part of CPAP therapy; if your apnea mask leaks, provides ineffective air pressure, is uncomfortable, or disturbs your rest or your family's rest in any way, you will be less likely to wear it.

Knowing this, sleep lab technicians and your [durable medical equipment \(DME\) specialist](#) will work with you to help you find the right mask style to suit your needs. They'll also show you how to tighten your straps properly and [how to clean, maintain, and store your CPAP equipment](#).

CPAP masks come in three basic styles: *nasal masks*, *nasal pillow masks*, and *full-face masks*. Read on to find out which type of mask may be right for you.

Nasal Masks



Nasal masks, also called *oronasal masks*, are popular because they cover the nose only and they come in enough shapes and sizes to suit almost any face.

The mask consists of a contoured, triangular dome that fits comfortably over the nose. Pressured air comes into the mask through the tube, filling the space around the nose. Air is inhaled through the nose only, leaving the mouth free.

Many users like this style of mask because the air pressure is delivered in a less direct manner than in other styles of masks. The air circulates in the space around the nose; breathing it in feels similar to breathing regular air.

A nasal mask may be a good choice for you if:

- you naturally breathe through your nose when you sleep
- you need higher air pressure
- you toss and turn in the night
- you prefer to sleep on your side

You may not prefer a nasal mask if:

- you have nasal or sinus problems (such as head colds or allergies)

Wearing this type of mask may feel uncomfortable to those with sinus pressure or

congestion. If you have a cold or allergies, you may want to temporarily switch out your nasal mask for one of the other styles.

Nasal Pillow Masks (Nasal Cushions)



The nasal pillow style of CPAP mask is smaller than a mask that goes over the nose. It rests above the upper lip and is secured around the head with a strap. Many people enjoy this style of mask because it's minimal and the headgear is less obtrusive than other styles.

Two pillows or cushions on the mask are inserted into the nostrils, where they form a seal. Air is delivered directly into the nostrils, with more direct pressure than in a nasal mask.

Because of the snug fit created by the seal, air is less likely to leak from nasal pillows. For some users, this tight seal, combined with a higher-pressure CPAP therapy, may feel too direct.

A nasal pillow mask may be a good choice for you if:

- you naturally breathe through your nose when you sleep (you may add on an accessory chin support to keep your jaw from dropping, to reduce instances of oral breathing)
- you feel claustrophobic wearing other types of masks

- you read, wear glasses, or watch TV before going to bed (the smaller profile of this mask creates a clearer line of sight)
- you toss and turn in the night
- you wear a beard or facial hair that might interfere with the seal on other masks

You may not prefer a nasal pillow or nasal cushion mask if:

- you require greater pressure settings for your CPAP therapy
- you have tender nostrils, sensitive nasal passages, or are prone to nosebleeds (the nasal cushions make direct contact with the skin inside your nostrils, which can cause dryness or pressure sores)

Full-Face Masks

A full-face CPAP mask is as it sounds — it's a mask that covers a much larger portion of the face, from the area near the bridge of the nose to the space underneath the lower lip. The main difference between a full-face mask and a nasal style mask is that full-face mask creates a seal over both the nose and mouth.

Other components of this mask include supportive pieces that fit to the forehead and the cheeks. These pieces ensure a good seal. A proper seal is important with this style of mask; multiple contact points with the contours of the face mean leaks are more likely to occur.

A full-face CPAP mask may be a good choice for you if:

- you need a greater pressure setting for your CPAP therapy
- you find it more comfortable and less claustrophobic if you are able to breathe orally (through your mouth) without diminishing pressure delivery
- you suffer from dry mouth; the humidified air delivered to a full-face mask can help to keep both the nasal passages and the mouth moist
- you sleep on your back

You may not prefer a full-face mask if:

- you have a beard, sideburns, or other facial hair that can interfere with the seal
- you sleep on your stomach

Remember, CPAP masks wear out over time. Even with proper care, you can expect to [replace your mask](#) on a regular schedule. The end of the calendar year, after your insurance deductible has been met, is often a good time to replace a

Different Types of CPAP masks: Nasal CPAP, nasal pillows, and full face CPAP masks



For some, the prospect of starting CPAP therapy to treat [sleep apnea](#) is welcomed. After years of poor sleep and [feeling exhausted all the time](#), one night in the sleep center using a CPAP mask seems like a miracle!

But for others, adjusting to CPAP can be a practice in patience that takes time.

Though the CPAP machine itself, with its humidification chamber, is the engine behind the therapy that will help you have unrestricted breathing all night, it's the delivery system—the tubing, mask, and headgear—which are most critical for a successful adjustment to the therapy.

If the mask doesn't fit well, problems with discomfort and ineffective pressure can make CPAP therapy challenging. The good news is that there are dozens of different types of CPAP masks available to meet most every need.

Common features among all types of CPAP masks

While different types of CPAP masks offer different features that may make them more or less appealing to others, they all have several things in common.

- Areas on each mask that come into contact with the face are usually cushioned with medical-grade latex-free materials to improve the seal it makes with the face as well as to reduce chances of skin irritation. However, people with sensitive skin may have trouble adjusting to some CPAP mask materials, such as gel, silicone, foam, plastic, or cloth.
- Any mask that doesn't fit risks leaking pressurized air, which works against the purpose of the therapy. Leaking air reduces the effectiveness of the pressure and can also result in dry or irritated eyes and excess noise during sleep for the bed partner.
- All of them come with headgear that helps to keep it in place. You can also add support accessories like a chin support to the nasal CPAP mask or the nasal pillows to help keep the mouth from opening as you sleep.
- The tubing included with the delivery system is expected to fit snugly into the mask.
- All masks have areas that allow for the release of exhaled carbon dioxide and some masks include ports for those patients who may also need to initiate supplemental oxygen as they sleep.
- Most come with replaceable parts, especially the cushions.
- Any mask can be overtightened by the user, which means they could wake up with marks on their face. A mask-fitting with a sleep technologist is essential prior to using any type of CPAP mask.
- Cleaning and safe storage is required by all mask users in order to ensure they last a long time and are not damaged by pets or children.

The three most common types of CPAP masks are *nasal masks*, *nasal pillows*, and *full-face masks*.



Nasal Masks

Also known as the *oronasal mask*, the nasal mask is worn over the nose only. The mask itself is a rounded, triangular dome shape meant to fit comfortably to the contours of most faces.

Nasal CPAP masks come in many shapes and sizes, which makes them a popular choice because there's one to fit just about every user.

The nasal CPAP mask delivers pressurized air through the tube and into the space of the mask. Air is meant to be inhaled through the nose only. This makes nasal CPAP a good choice for people who need higher pressures who naturally breathe through the nose.

The pressure is delivered less directly in this mask type and feels more like breathing regular air than with other mask types.

People who toss and turn or prefer side sleeping can use this type of CPAP mask with confidence.

However, people with nasal or sinus problems, such as head colds or allergies, may find the nasal CPAP mask uncomfortable when these conditions are present.



Nasal Pillows

Also called *nasal cushions*, this type of CPAP mask is much smaller in size. It rests above the upper lip and is inserted at the outer edge of the nostrils, rather than over the nose.

The two pillows or cushions in the mask seal to the nose to deliver pressure in a manner that's more direct than with the nasal CPAP mask.

Nasal pillows are minimal in design, with less obtrusive headgear and a smaller overall profile, which allows for more line of sight while wearing, making them perfect for people who read, wear glasses, or watch TV before going to bed.

Like the nasal mask, the nasal pillows work only when the user breathes through their nose. Some people who prefer nasal pillows may add an accessory called a chin support which helps keep their jaw from dropping as they sleep to reduce their chances of oral breathing.

Air is less likely to leak from nasal pillows due the direct nature of the seal. People who tend to toss and turn at night usually do well on this type of mask.

However, people who require greater pressure settings for their CPAP therapy may not be comfortable using nasal pillows as their delivery system may be too direct for higher settings.

Those with beards may find nasal pillows to be their best option, as there is no additional hair to interfere with the quality of the seal in this type of CPAP mask.

For some, nasal pillows offer a measure of openness that leads to less feelings of claustrophobia than other types of masks.

Because of the contact between the cushions and the skin, this may not be a good mask choice for people with tender nostrils or sensitive nasal passages, as nosebleeds, dryness, or pressure sores can occur.



Full Face Masks

The full-face CPAP mask fits a larger space, from near the top of the bridge of the nose to underneath the lower lip, creating a seal over both the nose and the mouth.

It usually includes supportive pieces that fit to the forehead and the cheeks to ensure a good seal.

Though it is larger than the other two options, some patients find it comfortable because it allows them to breathe orally (through their mouths) without diminishing pressure delivery, which can even reduce feelings of claustrophobia.

People who suffer from dry mouth generally do well with a full-face mask as the

humidified air keeps all the oral and nasal passages moist. Also, those who need a greater pressure setting for their therapy generally do the best on this type of mask.

Because there is more contact area in general for a full-face mask, leaks in general are more likely to occur. For those with facial hair, especially, any of the places where the mask meets with the beard, mustache or sideburns means therapy may not fare as well; it will be difficult to create a good seal, and leaks will occur.

Also, this is not a good choice for someone who sleeps on their stomach. However, back sleepers can expect to do very well using this type of mask.

Picking the right CPAP mask matters!

One of the biggest reasons why some people struggle with CPAP has to do with the mask they use. It could be too big or too small; it might not fit the landscape of their face in order to get a quality seal; it may be worn out and in need of replacement; and it might be constructed of materials or designed in a way that just isn't comfortable.

To ensure you are able to mainta



in your CPAP therapy without interruption, it is critical that you trial as many types of CPAP masks as you are able to before choosing one. It's much easier to stick to your therapy if you take the proper time to pick the right mask for you. Just like finding the right pair of eyeglasses... once you find the pair that fits, you'll never want to go back!

Finding the right mask means you're on your way to finding success and joining the thousands of users who now swear by their CPAP therapy. Remember, many of them struggled at first with comfort issues at first, too.

There's a mask out there to meet the special requirements of nearly every person, and your technician will be your best resource in finding the one that fits you best.

When you go in to receive your CPAP equipment, do let the technician know if you tend to toss and turn, what side you prefer to sleep on, if you have sensitive skin or nasal passages, whether you wear glasses at night or otherwise need an open field of vision, how frequently you experience head colds or allergies, if you commonly

CPAP Masks and Problems with Mouth Breathing



Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) is the gold standard treatment for [obstructive sleep apnea](#). The pressurized air moves from the CPAP machine, through a hose into a mask, where the air then enters the patient's nose and mechanically splints the airway open, so oxygen can get into the lungs.

A mouth breather is a person who habitually inhales and exhales through the mouth rather than through the nose. When a patient sleeps with their mouth open, the air from the CPAP entering the nose will escape out of the mouth. This problem causes the CPAP pressure going into the airway to be less than is actually required to keep the airway open, thus reducing the efficiency of the CPAP therapy.

Heated Humidification

Usually the sleep doctor's first go-to for resolving mouth dryness and mouth breathing is the use of heated humidification. Specially designed humidifiers such as this one can easily be installed into a CPAP machine.



Research on humidification goes back many years. In a study by Hayes in 1995, it was found that nasal CPAP that is used with an open mouth leads to an increase in nasal mucosal blood flux, which causes congestion. Hayes determined that this increased mucosal blood flux could be prevented by humidifying the air entering the nasal CPAP.

A study in 1999 by Massie determined that heated humidification increases compliance with CPAP by reducing the side effects associated with upper airway symptoms and causing the patient to awaken feeling more refreshed after using CPAP with heated humidification. Massie suggested compliance gains may be realized sooner if patients are started with heated humidification at the initiation of CPAP.

A research study by Araujo in 2000 found that heated humidification significantly reduced air dryness occurring during CPAP, even during mouth leaks, and can be totally prevented by using a full face mask.

Full Face Masks

Since air escapes from the pressurized airway tract during mouth breathing, CPAP mask designers have addressed this problem by developing a full face mask. A full face mask is a triangular designed mask that covers both the nose and the mouth. That way, the air can enter either the mouth or nose and it will still keep the airway open. As stated above in the Araujo study, mouth dryness will be total prevented by using a full face mask.



Even though full face masks are efficient in accommodating mouth breathing, they can be bulky and tend to leak because more mask surface is against the facial skin. People in general prefer a nasal masks which covers only the nose, but a nasal mask leaves the mouth available to open during sleep. Chinstraps are used with nasal masks to stop mouth breathing.

Chin Straps

Another popular go-to resolution for mouth breathing while on CPAP is chin straps. Chin straps are made of stretchable material that has Velcro attachments. Chin straps are designed to keep the mouth closed. Chin straps go under the chin and attach at the top of the head.

They can be effective, but the good ones are expensive. Problems arise because they can be uncomfortable and some of them have a tendency to cut across the ear, rubbing or intruding on sensitive tissue.

Because chin straps are made of stretchable material, they need to be tightened, sometimes significantly, to keep the mouth closed during sleep. The more pressure that needs to be used to close the mouth, the more the chin is pulled posteriorly. This causes the jaw to be pulled toward the throat, increasing the risk of the airway becoming restricted as a result of the receding chin. Chin straps that are made of non-stretchable material may be more effective at keeping the mouth closed in its natural position.

Chin Up Strips

Keeping



your mouth shut can be an arduous task sometimes! Some inventors, knowing that chin straps don't work on many people, came up with a U-shaped adhesive tape strip that they claim keeps your mouth shut. It did an okay job when I tried it out, but it still allowed air to creep out of the sides of my mouth. I had to pull my facial skin tightly together to get the strip to keep my mouth shut completely. The device did work then, but it was a little uncomfortable on my face.

Mouth Taping

Taping your mouth shut by placing medical paper tape horizontally over the lips and past the corners of the mouth is a sure way of eliminating mouth breathing. Sounds weird, right? Yes, I agree, but It is a very effective resolution for mouth breathing. With the correct type of medical paper tape, it is painless and you will sleep much better and avoid medical problems connected with mouth breathing.

Problems in Other Areas?

It sounds like dealing with mouth breathing is a pain, right? In spite of your mouth breathing, if your CPAP is making you feel better than you were before CPAP, why bother with addressing the mouth breathing?

Causes and Results of Mouth Breathing

Mouth breathing, called xerostomia, is caused by various reasons. Nasal congestion, a cold, [sinus/allergies](#) and other environmentally caused conditions will

resolve after a short period of time. Chronic mouth breathing caused by a deviated septum or facial bone structures, are best dealt with so nasal breathing can occur.

Breathing Through the Nose

It is natural to breathe through the nose. Life is dependent upon getting oxygen into our bodies. Air enters the nose where it is warmed, humidified, and cleaned, then goes into the lungs. Nose breathing makes us wake up feeling rested, it reduces [high blood pressure](#) and the [risk of heart disease](#), reduces anxiety and depression, improves concentration and memory, reduces attention deficit and hyperactivity, relieves headaches, migraines, back pain, sciatica, and neuralgia, improves weight loss and digestion, strengthens your immune system and resistance to the common cold, and helps us perform athletically better than if mouth breathing.

Breathing Through the Mouth

As discussed above, mouth breathing reduces the effectiveness of CPAP treatment. In addition, mouth breathing causes many dental and medical problems.

In children particularly, mouth breathing is significantly associated with atopic dermatitis, the malocclusion of teeth, reduced chewing activity during eating, propensity to gum disease, speech impediments, improper facial growth and development, longer and more complicated braces treatment, and tongue-tie phenomena.



In general for both children and adults, mouth breathing causes dry mouth which means saliva is not in the mouth. The teeth being bathed in saliva helps resist cavities. When the mouth is dry from mouth breathing, the mouth pH drops to acidic levels. Both a lack of saliva and a lower pH cause a higher risk of developing cavities. And you can get bad breath from mouth breathing.

Sinuses produce 25% of the body's nitric oxide during nose breathing. Nitric oxide increases the lungs' ability to absorb oxygen, kills bacteria, viruses and other germs, enhances memory and learning, regulates blood pressure, reduces inflammation, and improves the immune system. Breathing through the mouth eliminates much nitric oxide from helping us thrive.

Nose breathing eliminates the two pints of mucous the body makes every day. If you are a mouth breather, this mucous will not be eliminated, causing it to stagnate and cause infections, ear infections, and sinusitis.

Smell and taste are closely linked. If you are a mouth breather, this link is hindered and may lead to disturbances in your appetite and satiation levels, causing you to eat more than necessary in your pursuit for taste.

Your nose also has vital nervous system connections to your heart as well. Heart

rate, blood pressure, and stress can be raised by mouth breathing.

Summary

CPAP is the gold standard for treating sleep apnea. Breathing through your nose is the natural and optimal way to intake air. There are numerous advantages of nose breathing, and several disadvantages to breathing through your mouth.

If you breathe through your mouth, the air coming into your nose from the CPAP will just exit immediately out of your mouth, diminishing the effectiveness of the CPAP therapy.

For chronic mouth breathers whose condition is due to structural problem, surgery may be recommended. For others, mouth breathing can be eliminated or at least reduced by the various techniques or devices discussed above.

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What is the Best CPAP Mask for Claustrophobia and Anxiety?



There are a variety of CPAP masks that are suitable for those who suffer from claustrophobia and anxiety. The best mask will match the particular needs of the patient while providing the proper amount of pressure to keep the airway open. The best mask is the one that works best for you.

This article will discuss the different types of masks suitable for claustrophobia, the advantages and disadvantages of each and how to prepare for getting optimum results from the mask.

What is Claustrophobia?

The word claustrophobia comes from the Latin word *claustrum* which means “a

shut in place” and the Greek word phobos meaning “fear.” Claustrophobia is the fear of being enclosed in a small space or room and having no escape.

It often results in panic attacks and is typically classified as an anxiety disorder. Claustrophobia is typically thought to have two key symptoms: fear of restriction and fear of suffocation.

Suffocation

Since claustrophobic patients often have a fear of suffocation, wearing a CPAP mask that covers their nose and/or mouth may be particularly difficult for them. Even with the pressurized air coming out of the hose into the mask, it still may feel like suffocation. CPAP masks are designed to put air into you, so suffocation is not possible.

Even when the air is not blowing, a person can breathe with the mask on their face. That sounds great but what about that panicky feeling that’s making you want to scream and run? CPAP companies have developed masks that address these claustrophobic symptoms.

Add Stress Hormones to the Mix

A person is prescribed CPAP when their breathing stops five times or more per hour. Some people with really severe cases have more than 100 apneas per hour. Every time a person experiences an apnea, oxygen is not able to get into the body because the airway is closed. The body goes into “fight or flight” mode and stress hormones are released into the bloodstream.

After months and years of experiencing these breathing stoppages many times per hour, every hour of every night, there are lots of stress hormones in the bloodstream.

When a person first starts on CPAP, the person will have high stress. Add this high stress to a person who has the fear of suffocating, and wearing CPAP makes it even harder for claustrophobic sufferers. Once CPAP is used, those stress hormones will subside.

Dealing with Fear

Even though a phobia is an excessive fear of something (in the case of claustrophobia, small places or the feeling of being trapped), and it is an illogical

and irrational fear, it is still a fear nonetheless and must be dealt with as if it is a real threat.



Naming and facing your fear takes away some of its power. What kind of fears do you have when you try to sleep with the CPAP mask?

Is it bothersome to have something on your face?

Did you have a bad experience with CPAP previously?

Are the straps holding the mask to your face in your line of sight?

Does the weight of the CPAP mask bother you?

Did you try on a CPAP mask and you couldn't breathe through it, causing you to have a panic attack?

If you can pinpoint what makes you fearful about the mask or **CPAP machine**, you can deal with the problem. The CPAP mask designers and companies have developed masks to address the various problem areas.

Desensitization

With fear of anything, if you have a chance to examine the object or situation, understanding develops and the object loses some of its power over you. A common technique for overcoming fear is to become familiar with it.

Desensitization is the process of freeing someone from a phobia or neurosis by gradually exposing the person to the thing that is feared.

No matter what type of mask is best for you, you have to use it to receive the benefits of CPAP. To desensitize yourself, first pick up the mask. Hold it and examine it. Examine the different parts of the mask. It will have two or more parts to it. Look at how the parts attach to each other and to the hose.

Take the mask apart if you like, then put it back together. Find the small part that has holes in it. This is the exhalation port. This port allows carbon dioxide to be released so you do not suffocate.

Wearing the Mask While Awake

Hold just the mask (no hose attachment) up to your face for 10 seconds. If that's too much for you, try 5 seconds. Breathe naturally. Do this repeatedly, and as you get more comfortable with the mask on your face, hold it against your face for longer periods of time. Once your fear has subsided while you are holding the mask against your face, now place the mask (using the headgear) on your face.

Wear the mask around the house while you do distracting activities, like watching TV, reading a book or anything that will divert your attention away from the mask. Wear the mask for longer and longer periods of time as you get used to the mask on your face.

Wearing the Mask Attached to the CPAP

Once you are comfortable with the mask on your face, you are ready to try hooking it to the CPAP machine while awake. Use the same desensitization technique while using the CPAP. Wear the mask with the air running while watching TV, reading a book, or whatever sedentary activity you prefer.

If you get panicky because of the air blowing, or if you feel like you are suffocating, keep in mind that you are not suffocating. The CPAP is giving you air, not taking it away. But that's logical, and panic attacks are emotional. So do this when you feel panicked:



Close your eyes and take a deep breath, taking 5 seconds to breathe it in

Hold it for 5 seconds

Then breathe it out slowly for 5 seconds

Pause and don't breathe for 5 seconds

Again take a deep slow breath in, taking 5 seconds to breathe it in

Hold it for 5 seconds

Breathe it out slowly for 5 seconds

Pause and don't breathe for 5 seconds

Repeat this process until you relax

The idea is to get relaxed while having the mask on and the air pressure running. Try doing this breathing technique with the mask on and air blowing, but if it is too much for you, take off the mask and do the breathing exercises until you are relaxed. Then put on the mask with the air and do the breathing exercises.

The idea is to overcome your claustrophobia and fear of suffocation while the mask is on and the air blowing. Whatever it takes to get there, is what it takes. Try to remain calm and nonjudgmental. Breathing exercises are an excellent method for relaxing and will help you achieve your goals.

Types of Masks

There are [three categories of CPAP masks](#): Nasal pillows, nasal masks, and full face masks. Each of these mask types have different shapes and cover different areas of the face.

A nasal pillows mask sits at the end of the nostrils

A nasal mask covers the nose

A full face mask covers the nose and mouth

Each of these mask types offer patients comfort and effective treatment, depending on their particular needs.

Nasal Pillows vs. Full Face Mask



Nasal pillows are a minimal-contact mask that is designed with claustrophobic patients in mind. Pillows are made of soft plastic that sit at the end of your nostrils.

In the older designed models, the nasal pillows are attached to a hard frame, but the new models are comprised entirely of extremely light, soft and flexible silicone material that is very comfortable.

These pillows provide patients with a feeling of freedom, and lessen that closed-in feeling or fear of suffocation. There is nothing infringing upon your vision and you can wear nasal pillows while watching TV or any other activity.

Nasal pillows are not designed for mouth breathers. Mouth breathing is common in people who have [untreated sleep apnea](#), and most people will close their mouths while asleep once they start using CPAP.

Certain medical conditions, such as nasal cavity structure, injury or deviated septum, may prevent people from breathing through their nose, and they must breathe through their mouth. In that case, pillows are not the ideal mask, unless a chin strap is worn to keep the mouth closed. [If you cannot tolerate wearing a chin strap, you may need a full face mask.](#)



Full face masks cover both the nose and the mouth. This adds more contact with the face, but the newest models are light and have little-as-possible-contact with the face.

The mask is shaped in a triangle and fits over the nose and mouth, forming a seal to the skin. Even though you might think this would surely cause suffocation, if you examine the mask carefully you will see that the full face mask is designed with a valve that lets in fresh air from the outside when the CPAP air is not blowing,

assuring that the user will not suffocate. Some mouth breathing people prefer the full face mask over the nasal pillows.

Summary

It is best when choosing a mask to try on all three types of masks. What is comfortable for one person will not be for another. Each person has his or her own preferences and needs. Once you get accustomed and comfortable with the mask and airflow, the panic attacks and [anxiety](#) will leave you. It does take time and adjustment. When you reach the point where you are sleeping at night with the CPAP, your quality of life will improve and you will see that it was all worth it. Don't give up!

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What are Those Noises My CPAP Machine and Mask are Making?



CPAP machines save lives! There are a great many advantages to using CPAP, and few disadvantages. One disadvantage may be the noise coming from the CPAP machine and CPAP mask that can keep you awake at night. These noises are easily fixed. Read on.

Dr. Sullivan Saves the Day!

If you think your CPAP is noisy, picture this: It's June 1980. For the previous several months, Dr. Colin Sullivan, an Australian physician, had been experimenting with the idea of using continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) to eliminate sleep apnea.

In trial runs he basically glued masks onto pug dogs (the ones that snore and snort) and administered pressurized air to them with a vacuum cleaner motor so they would stop snoring and could breathe through the night.

One day a human patient came in with extremely severe sleep apnea. Dr. Sullivan wanted to do an emergency tracheotomy on the man, but the patient refused.

Even though the CPAP-vacuum cleaner had not been used on humans, the doc offered the patient a night with the noisy vacuum cleaner motor to see if it would help him. The patient accepted.

The [mask](#) was attached to the patient's face with a fast setting silicone sealant, and Dr. Sullivan controlled the air pressure. The patient awoke in the morning feeling more vibrant and refreshed than he had in years. After that, people lined up to get the "vacuum cleaner motor cure!" Birth of the CPAP!

CPAP Machines Now

Of course, since that fateful event, CPAP machines have been improved, reducing that blasting 70 decibel vacuum cleaner motor noise to a quiet, whispering 26 decibels.

CPAP machines can still make noise. The older models have a tendency to vibrate, hum, and be noisy. So if you have an older model, you may want to consider buying or having your [insurance company](#) purchase a [new machine](#) for you.

Perceiving Sound

Some people have extremely keen hearing and are annoyed at the slightest sound coming from a CPAP device. Women and children can hear higher tones than men. Others do not have such sensitive hearing. So whether a CPAP sound is disturbing or not depends on the individual's perception.



If your CPAP's natural sound is just too loud for you, try putting the CPAP further away from your bed. You can get ten foot tubing or use two attachable six foot tubes.

However, do not use a hose longer than 12 feet because the air pressure will not sustain itself moving over such a long distance from machine to mask.

Things That Make CPAP Go Bump in the Night

Placing your CPAP machine below your ear level will help reduce the sounds. It is not recommended that you put your CPAP on the floor, but some people do. If you do place your CPAP on the floor, be sure there is no carpeting, drapes, or other material that is blocking the air intake area.

Be creative in your quest to be healthy. One man drilled a hole in his bedroom wall, put the CPAP in the next room and ran the hose through the hole. Whatever works, right?!

Keep your CPAP away from dusty areas. Check the [air filter on your CPAP](#). This little filter keeps dirt out of the motor. When the filter gets really filled with dust and dirt, the motor will begin working harder and may make sounds. Make sure the filter is clean and unblocked. Change filters according to the manufacturer's recommendation.

If your machine vibrates, you may alleviate the sound by placing a small towel under the machine. Again, do not let the towel block the air intake area.

If you hear a gurgling sound, the humidifier may need more or less water in it. Adhere to the maximum fill line on the humidifier, and you probably won't hear gurgling.

CPAP machines have a feature that allows the air pressure to reduce when the patient is taking a breath in. This feature is known as A-FLEX, C-FLEX or EPR (expiratory pressure relief). Some patients and bed partners find the sound of this increasing and decreasing air pressure to be annoying.

To mask the sound, you could get a white noise machine, use a fan, or play some relaxing music. If all else fails, ear plugs can always be used to eliminate the annoying noise.



My CPAP Mask is Farting and Whistling

It is not always easy to tell where a sound is coming from. A farting or whistling sound may be heard in the night (other than from your bed partner!). Both sounds are more than likely coming from a [mask](#) than the CPAP machine. Sounds occur when there is a leak at the mask site, when the seal is not quite complete, usually near the eye or mouth, or from the exhalation port.

The most common type of leak problem concerning a CPAP mask is a seal leak. This occurs when the air inside the mask is leaking out between the mask and the facial skin. It is important to address any mask leak because they affect the integrity of the air pressure.

If the leak is significant, the CPAP may not have the ability to deliver adequate pressure to keep your airway open. A leak may also impair the machine's ability to detect what is going on with you, thereby not responding to your respiratory needs properly. A leak blowing into your eye can also cause dry eye and other eye problems.

When the air is leaking out of your mask, a simple fix is to slightly pull the mask away from the face and then let it come back to the mask. This will get rid of any creases that have formed on the silicone gel part of the mask and eliminate the mask. You may need to do this a few times. You can also just move the mask around slightly to reseal the mask to your face.

People have a tendency when having a mask leak to tighten the mask. This may be helpful in eliminating leaks, but overtightening the mask may cause more leaking to occur. So be careful of this.

Leaks may also occur because the mask is worn or old and needs to be replaced. Masks generally can be replaced every six months and your durable medical equipment (DME) company can assist you with getting a new mask.

It is very important that you **do not cover up the exhalation port** where the air is designed to come out of the mask. This port expels the carbon dioxide your body has produced. Blocking that exhalation port will cause you to rebreathe your own carbon dioxide and can be dangerous to your health.

Summary

CPAP machines are hard-working devices that last years and provide quality service with minimal maintenance. The original CPAP machine 36 years ago was a noise-producing lifesaver, but today CPAPs are quiet and/or silent—and still lifesavers! Noise coming from the CPAP mask may require mask adjustment or replacement, and noise from the CPAP machine may indicate a need for replacement, maintenance or relocation.



If you are new to CPAP, just like anything else new, it may take some getting used to the sounds that the CPAP makes during operation.

If the natural sound of the CPAP is disturbing to a sensitive-hearing person, masking the sound with white noise, a fan or relaxing music may be the answer for you.

Keep in mind that that CPAP sound is the sound of life, unlike **loud snoring** which is not.

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What happens if part of my CPAP sleep apnea mask breaks?



If your CPAP mask breaks, don't worry! Sleep apnea masks are not meant to last forever. In fact, for your health masks need to be both cleaned and replaced on a regular basis. Insurance companies and DME (durable medical equipment) companies know this and have a system in place to get you what you need so you can continue your therapy uninterrupted.

Replacing your CPAP Mask: Recommended Schedule

WHEN TO REPLACE YOUR CPAP SUPPLIES

CPAP MASK

<i>Cushions</i>	Once or twice monthly
<i>Entire Mask</i>	Every 3 to 6 months

CPAP HEADGEAR/CHIN SUPPORT

<i>Both</i>	As as soon as they no longer hold your mask or jaw snugly in place, or if the Velcro loses its grip or the buckles slip or break
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CPAP TUBING

Entire piece	If holes appear
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CPAP FILTERS

White paper filters	Monthly or as soon as they turn gray
Gray fixed filter	Every 6 months, sooner if worn out

CPAP HUMIDIFICATION CHAMBER

Entire piece	Every 6 months or if broken
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CPAP MACHINES

Entire machine	Lifetime of the machine (average 3 years); if not working, replace immediately
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CPAP masks are designed to be disposable. In fact, **your entire mask should be replaced every three to six months.**

If you've had yours that long or longer, congratulations! You may be entitled to a new mask.

When you speak to your DME supplier, be sure to ask whether you're due for a mask replacement and what your options are for getting [the best apnea mask](#) for your needs.

Talk to your supplier about scheduling regular deliveries, too. All sleep apnea supplies have [a recommended replacement and maintenance schedule](#).

If you have insurance that covers your apnea therapy, make sure your insurance company has a valid supply prescription on file with your DME supplier. Then talk to your DME supply representative about having parts mailed to you automatically when it's time for a scheduled replacement or update.

Auto-deliveries like this take the guess work out of re-ordering supplies. You'll always have the replacement parts you need. Receiving a [new CPAP mask](#) on a regular basis also reduces the chance that your current mask will break unexpectedly.

Parts of the CPAP Mask

Your CPAP sleep apnea mask has several different parts, all of which can be replaced by your DME supplier. They are:

- **Headgear/Chin Support.** Headgear is the system of straps that go around your head to hold your mask in place. Your chin support is the optional attachment that helps to keep your mouth closed when you're wearing your mask. If for any reason your headgear or chin support no longer stay firmly in position, it may be time for a replacement. Common reasons for requesting new headgear include broken buckles, stretched-out or loose strap material, or Velcro that no longer holds its grip.



Headgear straps and buckles (see blue parts, above) can crack, tear, or stretch out, requiring replacement.

- **Cushioning.** The silicone cushioning on your mask can break down, losing its shape or developing cracks, tears, or holes. These changes affect the fit of your mask and the tightness of its seal. Most CPAP users replace their cushioning on a near-monthly basis.



Examples of worn cushioning (top) and new cushioning (bottom).

- **Connectors.** Sometimes, the tube-shaped connectors that join the CPAP mask to its tubing become cracked, which can lead to air leaks. If you see a crack or other damage in your connector, you should replace it immediately.

Protocol for Getting Your Mask Fixed or Replaced

If any part of your sleep apnea mask breaks, here are the steps required to repair or replace the broken parts or to get a new mask altogether:

1. **Contact your sleep center or CPAP supplier.** To order CPAP supplies and replacements from Sleep Resolutions, for example, you can [fill out a supply request form](#).
2. **Indicate which CPAP supplies you'd like to order.** When calling in your order or filling out your re-order form, tell your customer service representative if you want a new CPAP mask, CPAP tubing, CPAP Filters, CPAP water chamber, or a

CPAP machine. If you have the opportunity to explain further, specify why you're requesting the new part. Is the item worn? Did the part break unexpectedly? Or is the replacement indicated by your recommended CPAP maintenance schedule?

3. **Talk to a DME specialist.** Ordering your CPAP supplies may require a separate phone call with a specialist who will determine what supplies you need and whether or not your insurance covers their cost. If you've [filled out a form with Sleep Resolutions](#), for example, you can expect a phone call back from a DME specialist.

Why a Broken CPAP Mask Needs Immediate Attention



Like any piece of medical equipment, a CPAP mask does not last forever. Even if you [maintain your CPAP equipment properly and clean it often](#), parts can become worn with time and use.

When this happens, don't let too much time pass before you request a replacement. [Starting up your CPAP therapy after a long lapse](#) can be difficult and may require re-training yourself to wear a mask.

If you can, re-order your replacement parts as soon as your mask has broken. (Many times, replacements may arrive within 48 hours.) Remember, complying with your sleep apnea therapy reduces your risk of developing a number of serious conditions, including [heart disease](#), hypertension, [stroke](#), and depression.

Just like wearing your CPAP mask, getting the supplies you're entitled to receive, promptly and on a regular schedule, is part of your commitment to your health and longevity.

How do I know when it's time to get a new CPAP mask?



Your CPAP mask is just as necessary for your health as a triathlon participant's running shoes is to his victory at the Olympics. Both mask and shoes must be replaced on a regular basis for optimum performance and results.

And just as important, whereas the Olympic gold medal offers the highest in sports achievement, so CPAP offers the highest in effective sleep apnea therapy.

Replacing your CPAP mask on a regular basis is necessary for your best health results.

Insurance Coverage

Medicare and private insurance companies usually cover the cost of CPAP masks, but since coverage varies from one insurance company to the next, it's a good idea to check with them to find out if they do cover the cost, what percentage they do

cover, and what deductible or out-of-pocket expense you may incur.

How Often Should Masks be Replaced?

WHEN TO REPLACE YOUR CPAP SUPPLIES	
CPAP MASK	
<i>Cushions</i>	Once or twice monthly
<i>Entire Mask</i>	Every 3 to 6 months
CPAP HEADGEAR/CHIN SUPPORT	
<i>Both</i>	As as soon as they no longer hold your mask or jaw snugly in place, or if the Velcro loses its grip or the buckles slip or break
CPAP TUBING	
<i>Entire piece</i>	If holes appear
CPAP FILTERS	
<i>White paper filters</i>	Monthly or as soon as they turn gray
<i>Gray fixed filter</i>	Every 6 months, sooner if worn out
CPAP HUMIDIFICATION CHAMBER	
<i>Entire piece</i>	Every 6 months or if broken
CPAP MACHINES	
<i>Entire machine</i>	Lifetime of the machine (average 3 years); if not working, replace immediately

It is recommended that masks be replaced every 3 to 6 months, and headgear be replaced every 6 months. This chart shows the recommended intervals for CPAP supplies to be replaced.

These intervals also vary among insurance companies, so check with your carrier.

A reputable durable medical equipment (DME) company should work closely with insurance companies, and they will be able to assist with equipment questions and possibly some coverage questions.

Mask Maintenance

To help your mask perform optimally, periodically inspect your mask for holes,

leaks, tears, or other damage.

A good time to do your inspection is in the morning when you clean your mask. Wash your mask with warm soapy water and let it air dry in a safe place, away from direct sunlight, pets and children.

There is nothing worse than feeling alive and alert as a result of your CPAP and then finding your 8 year old son has painted your mask black, put it on and has become Darth Vader, terrorizing the neighborhood kids with his mind-boggling throat grip powers. Keep your mask in a safe place.

Wear and Tear Signs to Look For

Here are some signs to look for to determine if your mask needs replacement:

Is it older than six months old?

Has it lost its shape?

Does it have a hole in it?

Is it cracked or torn?

Does it not fit properly?

Is it uncomfortable to wear?

Is there seal deterioration?

Do you feel leaks?

Leaks

Every mask has an exhalation port built into it to expel the carbon dioxide that you breathe out. This leak is normal and must occur in order to protect you from carbon dioxide buildup.

After some use, the headgear that holds the mask to your face will begin to stretch, and an older mask will lose its shape (see below). When the headgear loses its integrity or the mask loses its shape, it is time for a new mask. Leaks can occur from either of these events.

Usual places to feel leaks from old or non-working equipment are around the eyes and mouth. Do not tighten the headgear to eliminate the leak; tightening may cause sores on your face or nose and may cause a larger leak. It's time for a new mask and headgear.

Old Versus New



The photo above shows mask parts from a 9 month old mask cushion (on the top) and a brand new mask cushion (on the bottom). As you can see, the old mask cushion has lost its shape and its integrity.

"A Necessary Evil"

In a 2012 survey of CPAP users, 62 percent of the users saw cleaning their CPAP equipment as a "necessary evil." About 35 percent of users clean their mask once every few weeks.

CPAP has been proven to be the most effective therapy for obstructive sleep apnea, and it has given people their lives back, and yet, more than half the people who use CPAP find it inconvenient to care for the mask. A clean mask will help ensure quality performance.

Bacteria

Cleaning your mask will prolong and improve its use, but even if it looks pristine, it is important to comply with the recommended replacement schedule. Oil, bacteria from your face, makeup and perspiration will break down the integrity of your CPAP mask.

In a 2009 study by Horowitz at Harvard University looking at compliance rates and mask hygiene, it was found that bacteria can be eliminated by washing a mask daily with warm soapy water. However, masks that had been used for six months or longer had an increase in the amount of bacteria, despite adequate daily cleaning. Horowitz concluded that the accumulation of bacteria on CPAP masks was unavoidable.

Compliance Rates

CPAP therapy can save your life, and yet, less than 50 percent of people who are prescribed CPAP therapy actually use their CPAP. Compliance for using CPAP is not good. The major reason people stop using CPAP is due to an uncomfortable mask. If you are having difficulties with your mask, contact your DME company. They will work with you to troubleshoot your problem or find a mask that will work for you.

Helping patients comply with their therapy is one of the most talked about topics in the sleep medicine field. CPAP equipment suppliers are always researching and developing new, more comfortable masks to help people comply with their therapy.

Verifying Use

Because compliance is low, some insurance companies have begun requiring verification of use before they will pay for new replacement parts. With advanced technologies, insurance and DME companies can easily determine how many hours of each night a patient is using the therapy. Smart Cards, telephone modems and internet hookups enable effective surveillance of patient therapy usage.



Scheduled Replacement

Sleep apnea is very treatable with CPAP. Following recommended parts replacement schedules will enable you to continue to uphold your health and thrive.

CPAP masks are designed to be disposable. Insurance and DME companies have made it easy to replace equipment. They have developed replacement schedules so the patient can be equipped with the cleanest, most highly operable equipment to provide vitality and good health.

You can request to be set up on a regular delivery basis, and the replacement parts will be mailed directly to your home on a regular basis without the fuss of your keeping track of schedules. Just make sure that your insurance company has a valid supply prescription on file and you are all set!

Many Years of Health

Equipment companies and insurance companies make every effort to help you become compliant with your CPAP therapy. Adherence to CPAP therapy reduces your risk of developing and experiencing the serious conditions associated with sleep apnea such as heart disease, hypertension, stroke, depression, just to name a few. Your commitment to comply with therapy will contribute to your living a

healthy life.

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Image Credits: www.Shutterstock.com

Checking your CPAP Machine Filters: Replacement and Cleaning



You've taken the road to good sleep health by wearing your continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) or other sleep apnea machine. Congratulations! Like new air, oil or gas filters for your car, with every good piece of machinery comes a bit of routine maintenance or parts that eventually need to be replaced.

Considering the typical lifespan of a CPAP machine is 5-7 years, being diligent about changing its filters will go a long way in keeping it running well to treat your sleep disorder. Have you ever seen anyone change an air conditioner filter? The filter is covered with grime and looks disgusting. Who wants to breathe THAT into their lungs? This is one of the reasons why [we recommend against buying a used CPAP machine, especially at a yard sale...](#) You won't have any idea what toxic

materials you might be inhering.

Similarly, if you use a machine for sleep apnea that uses any form of positive airway pressure (PAP), filters should be changed as per manufacturer specifications.

Some filters are disposable, while others are washable. Either filter helps keep dust and debris—including [the airborne matter caused by second-hand smoke](#)—from entering and ruining the CPAP unit.

Troubleshooting CPAP

If insufficient air is being delivered by your machine, one problem could be that the filter may be dirty and needs to be changed. This blockage could also damage your machine. Considering it could extend the life of a CPAP machine, checking and changing the filter when appropriate is a best practice.

In fact, [the best durable medical equipment \(DME\) providers](#) will help you arrange a maintenance schedule to take the guesswork out of changing filters.

PAP: CPAP, BiPAP, APAP

CPAP, bilevel positive airway pressure (BiPAP), and automatic positive airway pressure (APAP) all are [under the PAP classification](#). Different units are prescribed for the various sleep disorders. For the purpose of this article, we will discuss the details of replacing air filters for three units by RESMED—the S8, the S9, and Airsense 10.

RESMED S8

To replace the air filter in the RESMED S8, first unplug the unit, then remove the air filter cover at the back.

Now the old air filter should be removed and discarded.

This is actually a very good time to compare the dirty filter to the new one. By remembering when you first started using the machine, comparing the old to the new will give you some idea of a filter-changing time frame for your next filter replacement.

The manufacturer suggests inspecting the air filter every month to check if it is blocked by dirt or contains holes. With normal use of an S8, the air filter needs to be replaced every six months (or more often if your device is in a dusty environment).

After the last step, insert a new filter with the blue tinted side facing out from the device. The air filter cover can now be replaced.

Resmed warns that the air filter for the S8 should not be washed. It is not washable or reusable. The air filter cover protects the device in the event of accidental liquid spillage. It is recommended that the air filter and air filter cover are fitted at all times.

RESMED S9

The Resmed S9's hypoallergenic air filter is made of acrylic and polypropylene fibers in a polypropylene carrier. This is ideal for those that are sensitive to other materials. The S9's standard air filter is made of polyester non-woven fiber.

Resmed warns that the air filter for the S9 should not be washed. It is not washable or reusable. The air filter cover protects the device in the event of accidental liquid spillage. It is recommended that the air filter and air filter cover are fitted at all times.

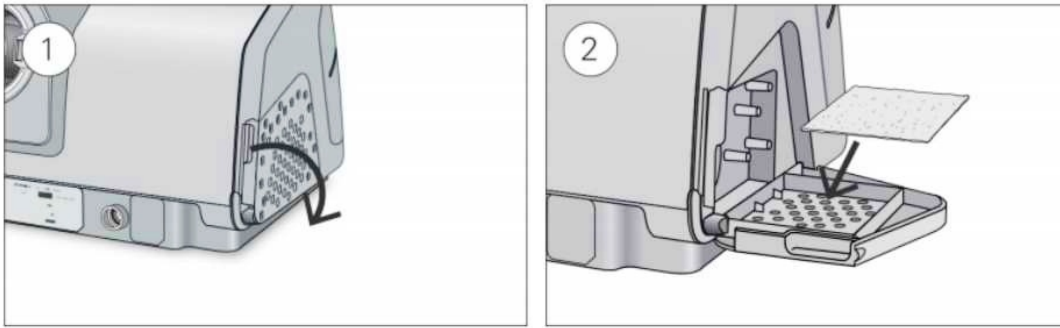
The S9 is capable of letting you know when there is a problem with the filter. The unit displays an error message stating, "Air filter is blocked." The message instructs the user to replace their air filter by first disconnecting the power cord and then reconnecting it to restart the device.

RESMED Airsense 10

According to the manufacturer, you should regularly check the water tub, air tubing and the air filter for any damage. Check the air tubing and replace it if there are any holes, tears or cracks. Check the air filter and replace it at least every six months. Replace it more often if there are any holes or blockages by dirt or dust.

RESMED Airsense 10: Changing the Air Filter

To replace the air filter:



1. Open the air filter cover and remove the old air filter.
The air filter is not washable or reusable.
2. Place a new air filter onto the air filter cover and then close it.
Make sure the air filter is fitted at all times to prevent water and dust from entering the device.

Allergies and CPAP: How to limit the amount of dust in the air?

If your environment is conducive to high amounts of dust, there are high-functioning and filtering vacuum cleaners on the market. Many people bothered by allergies, who live in a somewhat dusty environment (like Kansas!) find [using CPAP during allergy season](#) helps them improve their allergy symptoms. Another simple thing that you can do to help extend your CPAP filters is to cover your unit when not in use. It could be something as simple as a cloth dinner napkin, a pillow case, or a hand towel.

How do house plants help my CPAP?

Not only do indoor plants infuse oxygen into the air, they also delete carbon dioxide, and do a great job filtering out toxins, vapors, and chemicals flying about in your home.

Foliage cleans the air and removes chemicals toxins. These toxins can come from indoor house paint, chemicals and plastics.

Dust being a major problem for having to change CPAP filters—sometimes even more often than manufacturers' recommendations—plants can serve as an effective assistant. Plants have a good amount of surface area which assists in filtering dust out and improving the room's air quality.



Request New CPAP Supplies

As part of your regular CPAP machine maintenance you'll need/want regular replacements of filters, tubing, masks and other supplies. Night Time Medical specializes in CPAP equipment, masks, and supplies. In fact, that's all we do! Just click on the button below and one of our CPAP specialists will contact you ASAP!

[Request CPAP Supplies Here!](#)