

Overview



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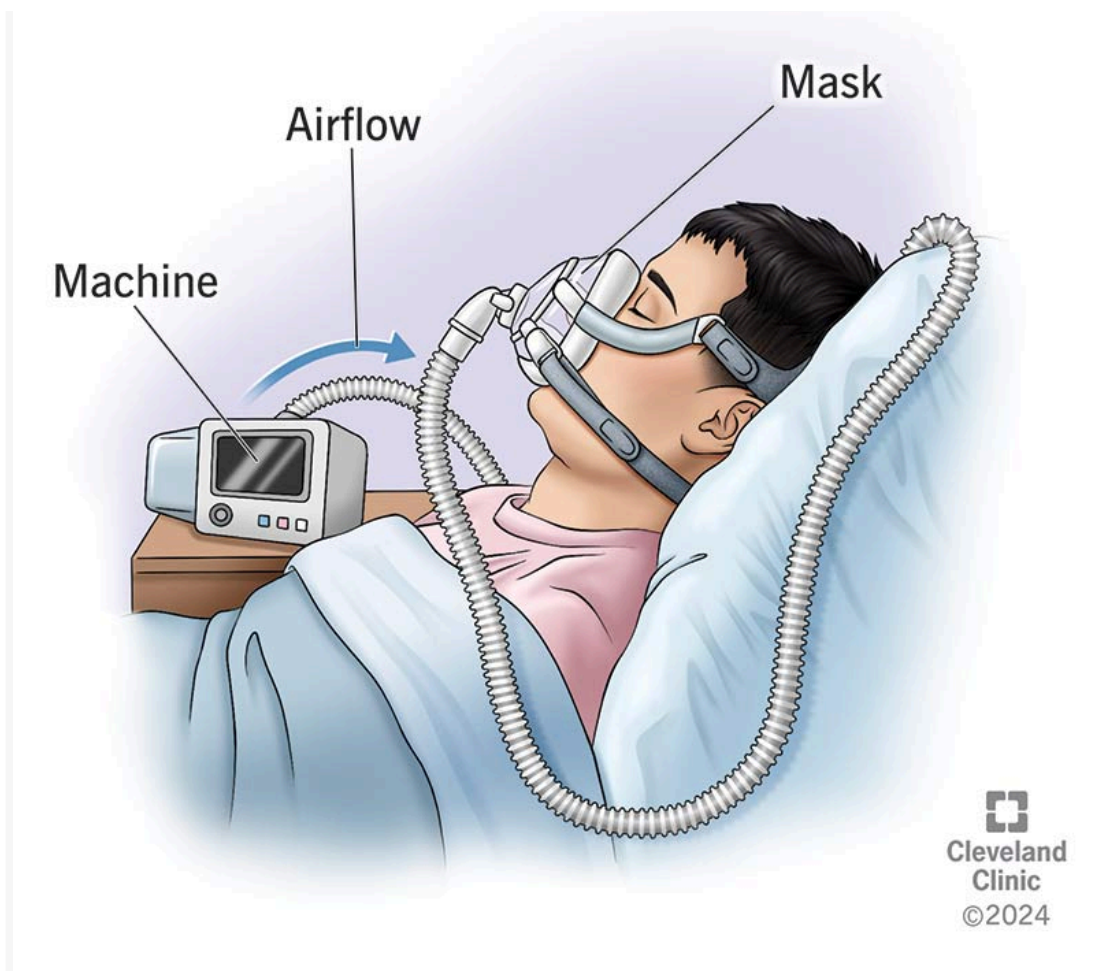
CPAP Machine

A CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machine is one of the most common treatments for sleep apnea. It keeps your airways open while you sleep so you can receive the oxygen you need. CPAP machines can significantly improve sleep quality and reduce your risk for a number of health issues, including heart disease and stroke.

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Overview



A CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machine helps treat sleep apnea.

What is a CPAP machine?

A CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machine helps treat [sleep apnea](#). This device delivers continuous air through your mouth and/or nose to help keep your airways open while you [sleep](#).

A CPAP machine includes:

- A mask that fits over just your nose or both your nose and mouth.
- Straps to position the mask on your face.

- An air filter that purifies the air entering your nose or mouth.

Some CPAP machines have other features as well, like heated humidifiers and adjustable pressure settings.

A CPAP machine is just one type of PAP (positive airway pressure) device. CPAP is the most common among these machines. Other types include:

- **Auto CPAP:** This device self-regulates, using a range of pressures to keep your airways open.
- **Bi-level PAP:** This machine uses two different pressures — a higher pressure while breathing in (inhalation) and a lower one while breathing out (exhalation).
- **Auto-bilevel PAP:** This machine self-regulates the inhalation and exhalation pressures
- **Adaptive servo-ventilation (ASV):** ASV is for people with certain types of central sleep apnea. ASV monitors your breathing and adjusts the pressures to make your breathing more stable. It may also deliver a breath when necessary.

What is a CPAP machine used for?

CPAP machines treat obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). In OSA, you briefly stop breathing while you sleep when your airways relax so much that they narrow down or completely close. This can happen hundreds of times in a single night, leading to a lack of oxygen. Untreated sleep apnea increases your risk for conditions like:

- [Stroke](#).
- [Type 2 diabetes](#).
- [Cognitive impairment](#).

Untreated OSA can also increase your risk of being in a vehicle accident while driving.

Using a CPAP machine when you sleep keeps your airways open, so you don't stop breathing.

Healthcare providers use CPAP machines for other types of breathing problems. For example, they use it for [preterm infants](#) in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) whose lungs haven't yet fully developed.

What does a CPAP machine do?

A CPAP machine takes in room air, then filters and pressurizes it before delivering it through a tube and into your mask. The continuous flow of air gently keeps your [tongue](#), [uvula](#) and soft palate from shifting too far into your airway. This stabilizes your breathing and improves your overall sleep quality.

For the sleep apnea treatment to work, you must use your CPAP machine every time you sleep. This includes at home, while traveling and during naps.

You must also [clean your mask and tube](#) every day and refill your medical device prescription when necessary to replace the mask and tube.

kind that's best for you depends on your comfort level, breathing habits and the type of sleep apnea you have. CPAP mask types include:

- **Nasal mask:** This option covers your nose. Healthcare providers often recommend a nasal mask if you move around a lot when you sleep.
- **Nasal pillow mask:** Rather than covering your entire nose, a nasal pillow mask only covers your nostril area. Some options also have prongs that fit into your nostrils. People who wear nasal pillow masks can wear their glasses comfortably.
- **Full mask:** This triangular mask fits over your nose and mouth. A full mask is best if you breathe through your mouth during sleep. Your provider may also recommend this type of mask if you have a nasal blockage.
- **Hybrid mask:** This is a type of full face mask that fits over your mouth and has prongs or cushions that seal your nostrils without covering the bridge of your nose.

Your provider will go over your options with you. They'll also work with you to find the best type and fit of mask. Don't hesitate to ask questions or voice your concerns. Some people end up trying a few different masks before they find the one that they like best.

Risks / Benefits

What are the benefits of a CPAP machine?

The main benefit of using a CPAP machine is that it reduces breathing interruptions when you sleep. Because of this, short-term benefits include:

- Improved sleep quality, which may make you feel better rested.
- Reduced [snoring](#).
- Less daytime sleepiness ([hypersomnia](#)).
- Improved mood.

Long-term benefits of consistent CPAP machine use may include:

- Improved [blood pressure](#).
- Reduced risk of cardiovascular disease events, like heart attack and stroke.
- Improved memory and thinking abilities (cognitive function).

What are the downsides of a CPAP machine?

The first few times you use a CPAP machine may be difficult. Many people at first find the mask uncomfortable, claustrophobic and/or embarrassing. It may be difficult to fall asleep at first. It can also be cumbersome to travel with a CPAP machine.

Know that there are strategies for overcoming these obstacles. CPAP machines are effective, and it's important to stick with this treatment. It may be helpful to talk to others who use CPAP machines to learn tips and tricks.

Side effects of CPAP treatment may include:

- [Congestion.](#)
- [Runny nose.](#)
- [Dry mouth.](#)
- [Nosebleeds.](#)

These side effects typically happen due to cold, dry air. Using a heated [humidifier](#) can often help.

CPAP masks may cause skin irritation or redness. But using the right size mask and padding can minimize these issues. Talk to your healthcare provider if you're having bothersome side effects.

When To Call the Doctor

When should I see my healthcare provider?

If you're using a CPAP machine and have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to talk to your healthcare provider. It can take time to get used to a CPAP machine. If you're having difficulties or want to try a different mask, your provider is your go-to resource.

You'll also need to see your provider to renew your prescription for a new mask and tube periodically.

Are there alternatives to CPAP machines?

Yes. CPAP machines are the most common sleep apnea treatment. But there are alternatives, including:

- **Oral appliance therapy**: A dentist who specializes in oral appliance therapy can make a custom device that fits over your teeth. This device opens your airway by placing your jaw in a more favorable position. Oral appliances work best for mild or moderate cases of obstructive sleep apnea.
- **Positional therapy**: People who sleep on their backs are more prone to apnea episodes. Certain devices encourage you to sleep on your side or stomach to reduce your risk for sleep apnea.
- **Weight management**: Obesity is one of the leading causes of obstructive sleep apnea. You may be able to reduce your risk for the condition by losing weight.
- **Surgery**: You may need surgery for certain causes of sleep apnea. Common options include soft tissue removal, jaw repositioning or an implantable nerve stimulator for hypoglossal nerve stimulation.

Depending on your situation, your healthcare provider may recommend more than one therapy or strategy to address sleep apnea.

Do CPAP machines really help?

Research shows that CPAP machines are incredibly effective in treating sleep apnea when you use them consistently. CPAP is often the first line of

A note from Cleveland Clinic

If you have sleep apnea, a CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machine may be your healthcare provider’s first recommendation for treating it. Needing a to use machine to sleep may feel embarrassing or annoying. But quality sleep is vitally important to your overall health. And a CPAP machine can offer it. If you’re not comfortable with your CPAP machine, talk to your provider. There are several types of masks and machines you can try. With a little trial and error, you’ll be able to get restful shuteye.

Care at Cleveland Clinic

Snoring can mess with your sleep, overall health and relationships. Cleveland Clinic experts are here to help you stop snoring and get some rest.



[Snoring Treatment](#)

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✓ Medically Reviewed

Last reviewed on 07/11/2024.

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