



Pulmonary, Critical Care
& Sleep Medicine

CONTINUOUS POSITIVE AIRWAY PRESSURE (CPAP)

CPAP, or continuous positive airway pressure, is a treatment that uses mild air pressure to keep the airways open. CPAP typically is used by people who have breathing problems, such as sleep apnea.

Overview

CPAP treatment involves a CPAP machine, which has three main parts:

- A mask or other device that fits over your nose or your nose and mouth. Straps keep the mask in place while you're wearing it.
- A tube that connects the mask to the machine's motor.
- A motor that blows air into the tube.

Some CPAP machines have other features as well, such as heated humidifiers. CPAP machines are small, lightweight, and fairly quiet. The noise that they make is soft and rhythmic.

CPAP often is the best treatment for obstructive sleep apnea. Sleep apnea is a common disorder that causes pauses in breathing or shallow breaths while you sleep. As a result, not enough air reaches your lungs.

In obstructive sleep apnea, your airway collapses or is blocked during sleep. When you try to breathe, any air that squeezes past the blockage can cause loud snoring. Your snoring may wake other people in the house.

The mild pressure from CPAP can prevent your airway from collapsing or becoming blocked.