

# CPAP UNITS



**PURPOSE:** Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) units are electrical devices that use a motor and a blower to maintain a flow of air that provides pressure to your airways, preventing them from collapsing. By keeping your airways open you can breathe uninterrupted during sleep. CPAP units require a doctor's order before use. You must always follow and abide by all manufacturers' operating and safety instructions.

**TYPES:** There are different types of CPAP units but they all function by applying low-pressure airflow to your airways. The air pressure holds your airways open, preventing the collapse of your palate and tongue for obstructing your air passages. Some CPAP units have a ramping feature that starts the air pressure at a lower pressure and gradually increases over time. This ramping feature can assist you in going to sleep.

**ACCESSORIES:** In order for the pressure from the CPAP unit to keep your airways open, a mask or nasal device must be used. These masks or nasal devices must be fitted to your face. There are many different kinds of nasal masks, nasal pillows, and oral devices to choose from to facilitate a good seal and maintain your comfort. If a headgear appliance is used to secure the mask or nasal pillows, it should be snug enough for a good fit in all sleeping positions. Your supplies have a useful life that varies depending upon use and will need to be replaced occasionally. These items usually can be setup on recurring delivery schedules so you don't have to make a special trip into your medical equipment company. These accessories also need separate prescriptions and must be properly fitted. Humidifiers are sometimes necessary to moisten the air.

**USE:** Each CPAP unit has one pressure setting that must be set and verified by your medical equipment company. Never adjust this pressure setting on your own. A good practice when preparing to go to bed is to put your headgear and mask (or pillows) on in front of a mirror. Once you have the headgear and mask on, get into bed and attach the tubing, then turn the unit on. It is acceptable to gradually work up to wearing the device the entire night. Your compliance with your physician's treatment plan is very important. No other piece of medical equipment alters your lifestyle like a CPAP unit. If you look at how many times you awaken each night, and the lack of restful sleep you have had, it is easy to learn to sleep with the CPAP device on.

**MAINTENANCE:** CPAP units should be kept clean by using a damp cloth and mild dishwashing detergent every few days. Never use alcohol or any alcohol-based solution to clean the unit. Always unplug the unit before cleaning. The CPAP unit must be completely dry before plugging back in. The air-inlet filter should be checked daily. If the filter is reusable, it should be able to withstand cleaning in a solution of lukewarm water and antibacterial dishwashing detergent and rinsed thoroughly with tap water. If disposable, the filter should be changed when dirty. Never clean your mask or nasal device in the dishwasher. Your tubing can be cleaned with the same antibacterial soap and water and hung vertically to dry. Always allow all CPAP accessories to completely air dry before reattaching them to the CPAP unit. Never attempt any repair on the CPAP unit. Each CPAP device should be regularly pressure checked according to manufacturer's guidelines. If you are using a humidifier, the *distilled* water must be drained and the humidifier cleaned daily.