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· PULMONARY MEDICINE
· CRITICAL CARE MEDICINE
· SLEEP MEDICINE

HEALTHY TIPS FOR SLEEP APNEA PATIENTS

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Avoid things that increase sleep apnea, like:

- * Weight gain
- * Alcohol
- * Smoking
- * Some medications like sedatives, muscle relaxants, and some sleeping pills
- * Sleep deprivation (not getting enough sleep)

Apnea patients also often have reflux (heartburn)

- * Avoid large meals at least two hours before bedtime.
- * Elevate the head of your bed 4 to 6 inches by putting old books, bricks or wood blocks on the floor under the head posts.

CPAP Tips

- * Use your CPAP whenever you sleep or whenever you nap.
- * Know how to use and how to clean your CPAP, humidifier, mask, filters, and accessories. Call your equipment company if you have questions.
- * Patients beginning CPAP often find that they have removed it in the middle of the night. This usually stops if you continue to put it back on when this happens.
- * Change the humidifier water every day.
- * If your mask has air leakage or is not fitting properly, call your equipment company to refit it.
- * Because most masks are made of plastic and lose their shape with time and use, masks usually need to be replaced once or twice a year. Call your equipment company.
- * Most CPAP units have a five- to ten-year lifetime and may need replacement then.
- * Most patients with apnea also have chronic allergies and nasal problems and may require additional nasal sprays, medicines, or surgical procedures. Infections or allergies that can block your nasal passages should be treated to help your breathing and continued CPAP use.
- * Take your CPAP with you when you travel. If you travel outside of the U.S., you may need an electrical adapter. If you travel to an unusually high altitude destination for a period of time, your CPAP pressure may need a temporary adjustment.
- * If you gain or lose 15-20 pounds or more, you may need to have your CPAP pressure adjusted. Call your sleep doctor.
- * If you have any nasal or throat surgery, your sleep apnea and CPAP need to be re-evaluated. Call your sleep doctor before the surgery.

- * CPAP units are unusually rented monthly and converted to a sale after a variable number of months, depending on your insurance. CPAP accessories like masks are a one-time sale. If you have equipment billing questions, please contact your equipment or insurance companies.

Treatment of sleep apnea may improve some of your other medical problems like high blood pressure. After beginning to use CPAP (4-6 weeks), you should follow-up with your primary care physician to re-evaluate your other medical problems and medications. Do not decrease medications on your own.

Your apnea symptoms should resolve with CPAP treatment. If you are experiencing any apnea symptoms (like awakenings, snoring, gasping, increased nighttime urination, headaches on awakening, or persistent daytime sleepiness), you need to call your sleep doctor.