

Handy hints to help users of Positive Airways Pressure (PAP) devices

My mask keeps leaking / is noisy / my eyes are sore and puffy the next morning.

Most masks leak at some point as many people move during sleep. Eventually nearly all people learn to manage their mask well to minimise leaking so they get effective airways therapy. But early on, it can take a while to get the mask adjusted to fit you well and learn how to fix minor issues.

- Try adjusting your mask straps to resolve the leak (air is meant to escape from the front vent), or try lifting and re-seating the mask differently or lower on your face.
- Talk to a Sleep Clinic physiologist as you may need to be fitted with a different type or size of mask.
- Some masks 'whistle' from the front vent when too much moisture is present. Try turning down your humidity.

All masks wear out eventually, and as they gradually loosen or stretch over time they often become leaky. Call Sleep Clinic if you need new mask parts (usually masks older than 6-12 months).

I feel claustrophobic at times / I find it hard having a mask on / the pressure feels high

This is common and usually settles with time. Often practicing with your mask and machine is the best way, along with persistence. Remember be patient with yourself.

- Try sitting with the mask on and PAP going for a period each day before you need to sleep. Feel free to move the machine and mask to where you will be comfortable to 'practice', for example, you might like to watch television, or listen to the radio. This helps you acclimatise to the pressure and the feeling of wearing the mask, so it will gradually get easier to sleep with. If problems persist, phone Sleep Clinic.
- Use the ramp feature to help the airflow start off gently and slowly.
- With the mask on, try five deep breaths, followed by normal relaxed breathing.

If you have a nasal mask, remember it is especially important to breathe in and out only through your nose, if you cannot do this contact Sleep Clinic.

My nose is blocking up in the night.

- Try checking the airplane mode has not been turned on accidentally (a small picture of a plane shows on the screen). If so, refer to your PAP manual and switch this off.
- Try increasing your humidity setting or aim to minimise your nasal congestion (if it is not caused by the machine), for example with a saline nose rinse such as NeilMed and a steroid nasal spray such as Beconase.
- Elevate your head slightly – a second pillow or towels under your mattress may help.
- Try placing a few drops of eucalyptus oil / olbas oil on a cloth positioned about 10cm from the air intake behind the back of the PAP machine (where you can see the filter).

I pull the mask off in my sleep / I am sometimes told I still snore.

- This can sometimes be caused by your mask leaking, or mouth breathing if you have a nose-only mask. Try the ideas noted in previous responses and if those don't fix the problem....
- Sleeping on your side may help. We can supply you with a "snore belt" or you can make you own with an old pair of pantyhose and two tennis balls secured around you (tennis balls positioned to the middle of your back) during sleep to ensure side-only sleeping. The effect you are after is like putting two or three tennis balls into a pocket on the back of a t-shirt, which makes it uncomfortable and unpleasant to sleep on your back.
- The machine pressure may need adjusting, especially if your weight has changed – contact the Sleep Clinic.
- Avoid alcohol before bed, as this can make your breathing much worse during sleep.

I have a nasal mask but I find myself mouth breathing.

- Try increasing your humidity setting or aim to minimise any nasal congestion (see previous response).
- Try a chin strap (available from Sleep Clinic). A chin strap helps keep your mouth closed when you are relaxed and asleep. A full face mask (nose and mouth) may be needed if this doesn't work or isn't possible. Contact the Sleep Clinic if that is needed.

I often wake up with a dry mouth, dry lips or throat.

This could be happening because your humidity is turned off or set too low or your mask is leaking or you are breathing through your mouth if you have a nose mask. See previous responses for ideas of what can help.

- Try increasing the temperature on you PAP humidifier. This creates more moisture in the air you breathe.
- If you have a nose mask you can phone us to obtain a chin strap to trial. A chin strap helps keep your mouth closed when you are relaxing and asleep. A nose and mouth (full face mask) may be needed.
- Keep water handy by the bed.

There is water in my mask / I feel like I am drowning.

During winter in particular this can be a problem. During the cooler weather condensation is more likely to form in the hose and end up in your mask.

Important: Make sure your PAP is lower than your head level when you are asleep – placing your machine on the floor is fine.)

- Try looping your hose up over your head and tuck it under your pillow. This also makes it easier to turn over at night and help the moisture drain back into the machine.
- You may like to try insulating your hose – obtain or make a hose covering.
- Try lowering your humidity setting.
- Warm your bedroom slightly (if possible).

I have a sore abdomen / gas / bloating after using the mask.

You are likely to be swallowing air. Common reasons are that your mask is leaking or you may be mouth breathing with a nose (nasal) mask. See previous responses for these problems.

- Contact Sleep Clinic as you may need to have your machine pressure reviewed.

Facial tenderness / skin irritation

- Ensure your head strap is not overtightened. Check you are cleaning your device properly as instructed. You may need to contact Sleep Clinic.

Waikato Hospital Sleep Clinic contact details

Please contact us on

07 839 8899 Extension **96609** and then

Press **1** for mask parts and equipment faults

Press **2** for appointments/speak with receptionist

A message can be left on the voicemail if phones are busy. Messages are checked regularly.

Email: sleeplaboratory@waikatodhb.health.nz