Your airway can become very dry during CPAP use. As your airway loses moisture, you may start to experience upper airway dryness and inflammation such as dry nose, dry throat, headache, chest discomfort, bleeding nose, dry or cracked lips, breakdown of the soft tissue around the nostrils, and infections of the nose, throat, or sinuses.

You may experience even more dryness if your mouth comes open at night. An open mouth, especially if you have a nasal obstruction due to allergies or a deviated septum, will lead to air escape that can quickly cause a dry mouth and sore throat as your nasal airway is unable to maintain warmth and humidity. In some cases, a full-face mask or chin strap may be needed to prevent this from occurring.

Humidifiers are used to moisten the air brought in through your CPAP. Use of a CPAP humidifier can reduce irritation along your airway and may help to relieve dryness caused by the therapy.

**There are two types of humidifiers:**

- Passive (cold water)
- Heated

Pressurized air is passed through tubing to your mask, thereby delivering air with additional moisture. Most people prefer the heated versions, which allow for more moisture to be absorbed into the air.
Finding the Right CPAP Mask for You

There are a large variety of CPAP masks available. A full-face mask covers the nose and mouth. If you breathe through your mouth at night, this might be a good option for you, especially if you have a deviated nasal septum and cannot breathe through your nose.

A nasal pillow mask only sits in your nose and is an option if you lie on your side or move around a lot in your sleep. Pay attention to size when choosing your CPAP mask. If you are switching styles or brands, be certain to review the way each mask fits. Just because you are a certain size in one mask doesn't mean that you are that size in another. CPAP masks are also adjustable.

Some people have issues with trying to get used to the mask due to feelings of claustrophobia. If this applies to you, it may take a little more time and practice to do this type of therapy. Talk to your provider about masks that will work best for you and tips you can use to get used to the treatment.

For more information, contact us at 717-316-2229 or visit UPMCPinnacle.com.

Information About the December Meeting

Dec. 3
6 to 8 p.m.
York Street Medical Center
400 York Street
Hanover, PA

The A.W.A.K.E. Support Group is for those diagnosed with sleep apnea, and it meets on the first Tuesday of every other month (February, April, June, August, October, and December). Each meeting features a specific topic about the diagnosis or treatment of sleep apnea or how sleep apnea may be related to other symptoms or conditions.

In December, we are focused on the importance of humidified air when using a CPAP machine — especially in the winter when the air is dry.

Put the next ASAA-A.W.A.K.E. Support Group meeting on your calendar: Feb. 4, 6 to 8 p.m.

This information is provided to you as a guide only and is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. If you have questions about your health, physical fitness, or medical condition, you should seek the advice of your physician or health care provider.

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