

Cleaning Your CPAP Equipment

CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) is used to treat sleep apnea. It provides pressure to your airway by a machine that blows air. The airflow from the CPAP machine is delivered by a mask into the nose and/or mouth. This acts as a splint/support to hold back the tongue and soft tissue from the back of the throat to prevent your airway from collapsing.

There are many parts to your CPAP machine. These parts need to be cleaned regularly to prevent infection. Like anything else, if you take good care of your CPAP equipment, it will last longer. **Do not use any harsh household cleaners to clean your equipment!** Alcohol, ammonia, chlorine bleach and other cleaners are harmful to the equipment and harmful to you!



Why Do You Clean the Mask?

The oils in our skin cause a change in the properties of the plastics in the mask. The mask cushion will lose its shape and get floppy over time. This will result in mask leaking. Therefore, it is important to keep your mask clean. Wash your face every night before bed using soap and water or a cleansing agent. Use night creams and lotions sparingly as they will cause faster breakdown of the mask material.

Cleaning the Mask, Headgear and Tubing

Wash your mask and headgear according to the manufacturers' guidelines. This information should have been given to you when you received your CPAP machine and can be found in your user manual. Most manufacturers recommend the following once a week:

1. Take the mask, headgear and tubing apart.
2. Hand wash them in mild soap and warm water. Use a mild dishwashing detergent, (i.e. Ivory, Joy, Dawn) which does not have any extra lotions or fragrances.
3. Gently wash the mask and its parts with a soft cloth.
4. Be sure to get the soapy water solution inside the tubing. Inspect the tubing for holes or cracks.
5. Rinse the mask, headgear and tubing well

Cleaning the Humidifier

Maintaining a clean humidifier is essential to prevent infections. The warm, dark and moist conditions are perfect for growing bacteria and mold. Keep it clean by using fresh **distilled water** in the humidifier every night. In the morning, discard any unused water and let the humidifier chamber air dry. Once a week, hand wash the humidifier chamber with mild detergent and warm water.

Disinfecting the Equipment

The mask, tubing, and humidifier chamber may also be disinfected after they are washed as directed above with soap and water. You do not need to disinfect the headgear. Vinegar is a good disinfectant; it is a mild acid that kills germs and is typically not harmful to the respiratory tract. Other cold sterilization methods are available for in-home use. To disinfect the equipment using vinegar most manufacturers recommend the following once a week:

1. Place the tubing, humidifier chamber and mask parts in a small basin or container.
2. Add a solution of one part vinegar and three parts water. Use enough of the mixture to completely cover the equipment parts.
3. Soak for twenty minutes.
4. Rinse the mask, headgear and tubing well.
5. If a vinegar odor remains, the equipment may be soaked/rinsed in plain water.
6. Shake off any excess water and set all the equipment out to air dry.
7. Once the equipment is dry, reassemble it so it is ready to use.

Cleaning the Filter

1. Wash the sponge air filter weekly in warm water with mild detergent.
2. Rinse the filter well and shake off any excess water.
3. Allow the filter to dry completely before putting it back in the machine.
4. If you also have a white paper filter (which is optional), throw away and replace when grey/dirty.

Cleaning the CPAP Machine

Gently wipe the machine with a damp cloth to remove any dust or dirt. Never submerge the machine or electrical components in water!

Replacing Equipment and Supplies

You should periodically replace your CPAP equipment. Contact your medical equipment supplier to find out how often your insurance will cover supplies such as masks, headgear, tubing, filters and humidifier chambers.

Visit our website for more information about support groups, clinical trials and lifestyle information.

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