

Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) Use in Children and Teens



What is CPAP?

CPAP stands for continuous positive airway pressure. It is used to help the airway stay open during sleep. The CPAP machine, about the size of a shoebox, creates air at different pressures. Room air is directed through a hose to a mask. The mask is worn over the nose or over the nose and mouth. It is held in place by soft straps that fit around the head.

Why is CPAP needed?

CPAP is used to treat obstructive sleep apnea. The air opens the space in the back of the throat so that the child can breathe better while sleeping.

What is obstructive sleep apnea?

Apnea is a Greek word that means “without breath.” Obstructive sleep apnea is caused by intermittent collapse of the airway during sleep.

To Learn More

- Sleep Disorders Center
206-987-8938
- Ask your child's nurse or doctor
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.
- For Deaf and hard of hearing callers
206-987-2280 (TTY)

How does obstructive sleep apnea affect children and teenagers?

Obstructive sleep apnea affects more than 3% of all children. Symptoms in sleeping children are similar to those seen in adults, and include:

- Snoring
- Restless sleep
- Breathing pauses, with or without gasping or choking or nighttime waking.

Children may not show such obvious signs, so a sleep study is done to diagnose sleep apnea in children.

During the day, children with sleep apnea may be sleepy. In many cases, children may have high energy, be hyperactive, become easily distracted and may exhibit mood swings.

Depression, learning disabilities, poor school performance and mood swings may all be signs of poor sleep. Untreated sleep apnea can lead to high blood pressure and impacts heart health and general health.

When CPAP is prescribed, it is important to use it on a regular basis. With family support and help from sleep clinic staff, using CPAP can become a normal part of your child's sleep routine and help keep your child happy and healthy.

Sleep disorder resource

National Sleep Foundation
www.sleepfoundation.org

Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

© 2007, 2009 Seattle Children's, Seattle, Washington. All rights reserved.

6/09
PE655