



## Information for Obstructive Sleep Apnea Patients on CPAP or BPAP Who Become Ill

With the recent outbreak of COVID-19 (Coronavirus), MetroHealth's Center for Sleep Medicine has put together a quick help sheet for our patients who are on CPAP or BPAP that includes advice regarding PAP therapy during acute respiratory illness.

### 1. PAP provider

It is more important than ever to know your PAP provider company and your settings. It's advisable to put that information on your machine (i.e. with sticker). The manufacturer (Respironics, ResMed, Fisher Paykel, etc.) is not your PAP provider. Your PAP provider is the person or company that provides your mask and tubing and filters.

### 2. PAP Machine facts

- a. We recommend following manufacturer (Respironics, ResMed, Fisher Paykel, etc.) recommendations for cleaning your device.
- b. If you clean and wash your supplies with vinegar and water (1 part vinegar:9 parts water), make sure to rinse at least 3-5 times to get rid of any residue which might irritate the lungs. Dry both the machine and the humidifier completely before reuse.
- c. Cleaning with soapy water is also OK but the lanolin and scents in the soap may cause irritation; it is even more important to rinse in this situation, and only use a tiny amount of soap.
- d. Humidifier – should be used with distilled water.
  - 1) If using tap water, boil a quart at a time for 5 minutes to sterilize it, then allow it to cool and place it into a clean container. Dry it out after use in the morning and let it be dry for at least 4 hours prior to reuse.
  - 2) Even if you do not use distilled water, cleaning with vinegar and water can reduce calcium deposits.
  - 3) If you cannot get or do not use distilled water in your chamber. You can often obtain a new humidifier chamber from your PAP provider company if calcium or other elemental deposits from hard water build up in the chamber (these do not represent infection or fungus).



3. Acute respiratory infection, including COVID-19
  - a. In addition to using your existing cleaning as above, please review the [CDC guidelines regarding cleaning and disinfection](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/index.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/index.html>).
  - b. Due to asymptomatic viral shedding, it is very hard to prevent infection of other family members if you are at home. Spread of the infection via objects and surfaces contaminated by the virus appears to be a very important part of how viruses spread and may be made worse with the use of PAP therapy, which can spread the virus in the air.
  - c. If you can continue to use your PAP device:
    - 1) You should stay and sleep in a separate room from your family and use a separate bathroom (if at all possible). Wipe down surfaces regularly with recommended cleaning solutions.
    - 2) Keep your filters clean and the humidifier dry when not in use. Leave the machine on for 10-25 minutes after dumping out the humidifier water.
    - 3) Consider taking OTC cough suppressants to help reduce your cough at night. Consider a nasal saline wash, nasal dilator sprays (such as nasal steroids) or breathing strips to help with nasal congestion.
    - 4) Clean out the mask if you wake up sneezing. In the morning make sure to clean out and dry the mask and machine as above.
    - 5) Try to set the machine for an auto-ON and auto-OFF to reduce the time that the mask and the machine are blowing into the room rather than your nose and face. This applies to both CPAP and BPAP (exception being to dry the humidifier as noted in 2) above).
    - 6) Upon recovery from COVID-19 or other respiratory infections, it is advisable to replace the filters and mask, given the uncertainty regarding the possibility of re-infection.
  - d. If you are having problems using your PAP therapy due to your infection:
    - 1) It is likely OK to be off your therapy for 1-2 nights.
    - 2) Please contact your Sleep Medicine provider to decide how best to proceed.
4. If you are feeling short of breath and feel you need an evaluation:
  - a. Contact your doctor first.
  - b. If advised to go to the ER or urgent care, wear a mask when you come in.



5. If you are hospitalized:

- a. Take a copy of your PAP settings if you have them
- b. Pack up your PAP machine and mask (and a clean hose) to bring with you. Keep in mind that each hospital will have its own rules and policies. Some may let you use your own device and mask, but others may require you to use their equipment
- c. If you are severely ill, your doctors will make the decision for the best therapy for you at the time, which may include holding your PAP device at the time.