



CARE OF THE NOSE AND SINUSES FOR CPAP USERS

The use of nasal CPAP requires clear nasal passages. If you have nasal and sinus congestion due to allergies or a cold, your CPAP may be hard to tolerate or it may not provide adequate pressure to keep your airway open. Avoid short-acting decongestant nasal sprays (such as Afrin, NeoSynephrine or Vicks) because they cause the nasal membrane swelling to “rebound” within a couple of hours and they don’t work as well if used frequently. Below are healthier solutions for nasal congestion:

1. Antihistamine medications (oral or nasal) and oral decongestants

These are fine to use, assuming you have certain medications that work for you and your doctor has approved them for any medical problems you have.

2. Nasal Saline Sprays/Neti Pot

For nasal congestion, sinus drainage, and even for daily moisturizing of inside of the nose, use a saline (salt water) solution. These are available at most stores that sell cold remedies, usually in the same general area as cold and allergy supplies, costing \$2.50 - \$3.50.

Most people find saline spray helpful. A fine mist of saline is produced when the bottle is squeezed. The nozzle of the bottle is inserted into the very front of the nostril (while the other nostril is pressed closed). Inhale through the open nostril as you squeeze the saline bottle. Use this as much as needed during the day and night. One spray will moisturize the nasal passage; several sprays in a row will provide a “washing” effect, helping clear congestion if you blow your nose immediately after. This also helps moisturize your upper nasal passages and your sinus area.

Note: the more you use at one time, the more likely you are to swallow some of the salt water. If you have kidney problems or congestive heart failure you may wish to use this type of product less often and check with your primary care doctor first.

More intensive forms of saline treatment are available. These products provide a safe, slightly pressurized stream of saline that can help rinse the sinuses and the nasal passages. These are also available in the cold remedy section of stores and include brand names (example: EntSol and Sinus Rinse) and generic products. The pressurized stream of saline is more than some people wish to tolerate, so it’s important to check with your primary care and/or Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT) providers to ensure pressurized saline washes are appropriate for you.

3. Nasal Steroid Sprays

These prescription medications (Flonase, Beconase, Nasonex and Nasacort) contain corticosteroids which have anti-inflammatory properties and work to decrease the actions of cells involved in the inflammation cascade. You will not notice an immediate symptom relief (they work within 24-48 hours). These medications work best if used at the same time daily for an extended period of time; therefore, if you have annual allergies start this therapy early to prevent the symptoms.

You may use these medications in conjunction with the above described saline sprays. Use the saline sprays first to “clean out” your nasal passages, then use the steroid nasal sprays following the cleansing. Using these drugs will not cause side effects often associated with steroids, such as habituation, weight or muscle gain, and anxiety. You may obtain a prescription for these medications from your primary doctor or from the office.

4. CPAP Full Face Mask Options:

You will have the option from your insurance company to obtain additional CPAP supplies at regular intervals, including a new nasal mask every few months. You may opt to add a full-face mask to your CPAP mask collection; this type of mask can help you breathe through your mouth during sleep if your nose is congested. You can simply change back to your usual nasal mask when your nasal congestion gets better.