

SLEEP MASK INSTITUTE

PATIENT EDUCATION UPDATE

COMPLIANCE: THE MOST IMPORTANT “C” IN CPAP

Imagine this: a person takes the time & effort to get a drivers license, spends a lot of money on buying a new car, and then leaves it just parked in the garage.

Doesn't make a lot of sense, does it? Well, it happens with a lot of new CPAP patients. In fact, on average, only about 50% of people “comply” by regularly using their CPAP.

This 50% compliance rate is not surprising given that most patients don't get enough initial training or ongoing support. But research shows that patients who get the right support through “CPAP chronic care” have compliance rates of 88-95%. That means you can possibly double your chances of success!

Why Does Compliance Matter?

Leaving your car parked in the garage may be a waste of money, there's no risk to your health. But if you “park” your CPAP in the closet or don't use the CPAP on a daily basis, then you are putting yourself at great risk:

- Increased chance of heart attack and stroke
- Higher risk of hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Increased risk of diabetes
- Brain-related issues including depression and memory loss
- Increased likelihood of obesity (which can make your apnea even worse!)

How Can You Get Help on Compliance?

CPAP chronic care involves a couple of different things:

- Education – stay up-to-date on the risks of apnea & benefits of CPAP
- Monitoring & Motivation – have someone be your “coach” to stay on track
- Trouble-Shooting – have an expert who can help you with problems big or small (which result in people using their CPAP less and less over time)

Relying on friends & family is better than nothing, but it's better to find other resources that you can lean on for the long haul. Here are some examples:

- Self-help groups that meet monthly or quarterly – like AWAKE
- Wellness programs focused on apnea that are paid for by employers
- DMEs that provide coaching & chronic care with the CPAP equipment

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7 SURVIVAL TIPS FOR APNEA PATIENTS WITH NO OR LIMITED HEALTH INSURANCE

A Double Challenge: Complying with CPAP therapy to maintain your health can be a challenge. But it's much tougher if you don't have health insurance that will pay for "full service" DMEs and/or ongoing medical management of apnea.

Here's some tips for people facing this "double challenge" of trying to cope with apnea without the support of full health insurance:

- 1. See CPAP as the Most Important Investment You Can Make:** By making sure you're getting good sleep, you're investing in a healthier & less expensive future:
 - Avoiding apnea-related health complications (like heart attack, stroke, hypertension & diabetes) that can shorten your life & result in very expensive doctor/hospital trips
 - Avoiding expensive & life-threatening car accidents (because apnea is associated with 100,000 traffic accidents each year)
 - Staying alert on the job: companies are increasingly aware of apnea's impact on worker productivity. Good sleep can be the difference between a raise vs. a pink slip!
- 2. Select Smart Equipment:** If you have limited insurance, spending a bit more for "smart technology" is a lot cheaper than having to pay for repeated trips to the doctor. Auto-adjusting CPAPs, aka Auto-PAPs, can save you hundreds or thousands of dollars – and make using CPAP much more comfortable!
- 3. Stick with Quality Manufacturers:** There are no-name manufacturers with cheap equipment, but remember you'll be using this every night for years – you don't want to have to buy a new device every 6-9 months. The recognized quality manufacturers are ResMed and Respiroics (for devices & mask), as well as Fisher & Paykel (for masks).
- 4. Avoid "Grey Market" or "Fly by Night" Web Vendors:** Buying medical equipment on the web can be risky if you're not selective. Two tips for spotting a quality vendor:
 - Certification as a ResMed Preferred Internet Vendor (means no "grey market" goods)
 - Approved for Medicare patients (means not a "fly by night" player)
- 5. Get "RT Follow-Up" for the First Month:** Most people who quit CPAP will quit in the first 30 days, usually because they didn't have an expert Respiratory Therapist to turn to for trouble-shooting problems or educating them on using/cleaning the CPAP easily. If you don't get this, you'll double the chances of wasting the money you spent on CPAP.
- 6. Refresh Key Parts & Supplies:** Buying a car but skimping on oil changes is not smart. Same with CPAP. You'll need to regularly change cushions, filters, and even the mask.
- 7. Get Coaching for the Long Haul:** RT support in the first 30 days is critical, but you'll also need support as your equipment gets older and as seasons change (CPAP therapy varies a lot with changes in temperature, humidity, etc.). A CPAP coach is critical to help you trouble-shoot problems as they arise. Be sure to select a DME that provides free coaching when you buy your refresh supplies.