

TROUBLESHOOTING YOUR PAP

Common problems we hear about PAP use and ideas to help.



Sleep issues

PROBLEM:

I can't fall asleep with PAP. This is common during the early days of therapy. There is no harm in using PAP while you are awake, so try wearing it while you are reading a book or watching TV or doing some relaxation exercises (see some examples from [YouTube](#) and Massachusetts General Hospital). The more you practice, the more normal your breathing will feel. When you are ready to fall asleep, try activating the ramp feature so that the air pressure is not too high.

PROBLEM:

I am able to fall asleep with PAP, but when I wake up, my mask is off.

Some people subconsciously take their mask off during the night, usually in the early stages of therapy while getting used to it. Keep using your mask, and consider some practice sessions (see the prior answer for more on this).

PROBLEM:

My partner says I am still snoring.

If PAP is working well, there should be little, if any, snoring. Your provider might need to change your device settings.

Mask/machine issues

PROBLEM:

Air is leaking from between the mask and my skin. This means your mask doesn't fit properly. Check out our information on masks or talk to your provider.

PROBLEM:

Water is getting into my mask. This is sometimes called rainout. Try turning the humidifier down (for information on how, [watch this video](#)). If your bedroom is fairly cool and you are using a non-heated hose, water can condense on the tube. Try wrapping your mask with fabric or buying a "hose cozy".

PROBLEM:

I hear a whistling noise while my machine is on. This might be caused by rainout. Follow the tips above.





Symptoms

PROBLEM:

My eyes are red and/or sore after I wake up. Eye irritation might be a sign that air is leaking from the top of your mask. Check out our information on proper mask fit, or talk to your provider.

PROBLEM:

I wake up with a dry mouth. Try increasing your humidifier setting. (See [videos to learn about your humidifier](#).) If you are using a nasal mask, your mouth might be opening during sleep, which can cause dryness. Try a chinstrap, which puts gentle pressure under your chin to keep your mouth closed while you sleep.

PROBLEM:

I have a runny nose, congestion, or am sneezing. Try increasing the humidifier's setting, a little each night, until your symptoms clear up.

PROBLEM:

I feel bloated, and/or I have been burping or gassy. This might be a sign that you are swallowing air. Try using the “ramp feature” to reduce the pressure while you are falling asleep.

Other tips:

- Many masks come with clips or hooks, so that the Velcro doesn't need to be adjusted each night. Constantly using the Velcro will shorten the life of the mask.
- The straps may stretch slowly over time. After the first few weeks of using a new mask, the straps may need to be tightened.
- Some people find that taking the mask off and putting it back on after using the bathroom at night makes it hard to get back to sleep. Try disconnecting the mask from the hose and wearing it while you are out of bed, so that it is easy to start using your PAP when you come back to bed.
- It is important that your mask, hose, and water chamber are cleaned regularly. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions, and don't use a dishwasher or washing machine. Try to clean your equipment in the morning, so that it is dry when you are ready to sleep at night.

Resources

American Academy of Sleep Medicine “What is PAP Therapy?”
<https://sleepeducation.org/patients/cpap/>

American Thoracic Society “Quick Troubleshooting to Address Problems with Use”
<https://www.thoracic.org/patients/patient-resources/resources/pap-troubleshooting.pdf>