

Coronavirus FAQs for Sleep Apnea Patients

Independent Respiratory Services (IRS) understands that during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak you may have some questions about the coronavirus as it relates to sleep apnea. IRS encourages you to visit The Government of Canada website <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada.html> to review current information on the coronavirus. The information below is for informational purposes only. IRS is unable to provide specific medical advice regarding COVID-19.

1. Do I have a higher risk of getting coronavirus because I have sleep apnea?

There is no evidence that sleep apnea causes you to have a higher risk of getting the coronavirus. People who do have a higher risk for coronavirus include:

- Older adults, especially in nursing homes
- Those who have serious medical disorders. These disorders include:
 - Heart disease
 - Diabetes
 - Lung disease
 - Kidney disease
- Those who have a medical disorder, or take a medication, that weakens the immune system
- Those who have had close contact with another person who has the coronavirus

2. If I have symptoms of the coronavirus, should I continue using my CPAP?

If you are sick with the coronavirus, you should follow current Government of Canada recommendations and talk to your physician before stopping any medical treatments.

If you have symptoms of coronavirus or have tested positive for COVID-19, using CPAP may potentially spread infectious droplets further than normal nighttime breathing. To avoid putting bed partners at increased risk, anyone with symptoms of coronavirus should sleep in a separate room and maintain distances from others in the house.

3. If I have the coronavirus, will my CPAP be helpful for my breathing? Or could CPAP cause the coronavirus to get worse?

It is unclear whether CPAP could make the coronavirus worse. Talk to your physician if you have any concerns.

4. If I get the coronavirus or someone in my home has the coronavirus, how should I clean and disinfect my CPAP mask and hose, and how often?

You should clean your CPAP mask and humidifier water chamber daily. A deep cleaning of all CPAP equipment should be completed at least once a week. It is unclear if extra cleaning is required due to the coronavirus. It is important to continue to properly clean and disinfect your CPAP equipment on a regular basis including the mask, air tubing and humidifier water chamber. Wash your face and hands prior to putting on the CPAP mask and using the CPAP machine. Daily and weekly cleaning steps are outlined below:

Daily Equipment Cleaning

- Clean your mask cushion daily with warm water and mild soap then rinse and let it air dry. **Alternatively**, wipe your mask every day with a CPAP mask wipe. CPAP mask wipes are a simple and effective way to keep your mask clean. Contact your local IRS office or 1-877-965-6204 to order additional CPAP mask wipes.
- When not in use for consecutive days, empty the water from the humidifier water chamber, rinse it and let it air dry. Refill the chamber with distilled water prior to using the machine.

Weekly Equipment Cleaning

- Mask - Disassemble your mask and in a sink, soak your mask cushion, mask frame and headgear. To remove any oils, gently rub with dedicated cpap soap and warm water. Rinse and let air dry.
- Hose - Soak your hose in warm water with some cpap soap, using a dedicated tubing brush, scrub the inside, rinse the inside and outside of the tubing with water and let air dry.
- Humidifier water chamber – Fill the water chamber with a solution of 1-part white vinegar and 3-part water for 15-20 minutes.
- Rinse all parts with warm water and allow the parts to air dry.

5. If I'm recovering from COVID-19 and previously stopped CPAP treatment, how should I restart CPAP treatment without getting re-infected?

Before re-starting CPAP therapy, we recommend setting your CPAP machine aside for 3 days and then deep cleaning it. To deep clean your CPAP equipment follow the weekly equipment cleaning steps that includes thoroughly washing all CPAP parts with mild soap and warm water and run your humidifier water chamber through the dishwasher (if applicable, please see manufacturers recommendation).

If I have COVID, can I still send my CPAP device, mask or accessories for repairs or replacement?

If you require repairs or replacement of your CPAP device, mask or accessories, please call your local IRS office or 1-877-965-6204 to discuss your options. It is important that you have the required sleep equipment to maintain your optimal sleep therapy.

6. Distilled water is unavailable in my area. What should I use in my CPAP humidifier?

According to CPAP manufacturers, optimal humidifier performance requires distilled water to prevent mineral buildup in the humidifier tub. If distilled water is unavailable, tap or bottled water may also be used. It will not harm the device or pose a risk to you. Use of non-distilled water will require more rigorous humidifier water chamber cleaning to prevent excess mineral buildup in the tub. Please clean your water chamber every morning after each use if this is the case.

7. Will the filter in my CPAP machine protect me from germs?

No, the filter in a CPAP machine only keeps dust out of the machine and does not filter out germs. The air from your machine will be no different than the air you breathe. It is recommended to replace your filters monthly or at a minimum every 3 months or refer to manufacturer's recommendation.

8. Can I get sick from a dirty CPAP mask?

A mask that hasn't been cleaned & maintained properly can expose you to any germs that could lead to health problems and skin breakouts.

9. Why should I replace my mask & other accessories?

As your mask and other CPAP accessories start to age the materials, they are made of start to break down. Your mask and hose absorb dirt even if you clean it daily. The silicon interface starts to lose its flexibility and your mask seal will worsen, which will affect your sleep therapy. As your mask ages, this silicon will develop micro abrasions, a tiny microscopic tear or hole, that become breeding grounds for germs. After six months, even a freshly cleaned mask retains germs.

10. How often should I replace CPAP supplies?

The manufacturers recommend replacing your CPAP mask, hose and water chambers every 6 months and replacing your CPAP machine filter at least every 3 months or please refer to manufacturer's recommendation. Contact your local IRS office or 1-877-965-6204 to order replacement parts.

11. How can I get CPAP supplies during the COVID-19 situation?

IRS is offering free shipping or contactless pick-up of CPAP products and sleep accessories. Contact your local IRS office or 1-877-965-6204 to order replacement parts.