



## Patient Information

# Nasal CPAP Acclimation Procedure

Some patients have trouble adjusting to nasal CPAP at first because of claustrophobia or a feeling that CPAP makes it more difficult to breathe. In reality, nasal CPAP actually prevents apnea spells and helps the apnea patient continue breathing during sleep. Moreover, patients who cannot physically use nasal CPAP are very rare. Nevertheless, these feelings of being closed in, or of being unable to breathe properly, are real and must be overcome before nasal CPAP can be used effectively. Fortunately, most patients with these claustrophobic feelings can learn to use nasal CPAP by gradually adjusting to it. It is important to remember that the claustrophobic feelings will disappear during sleep, and that nasal CPAP cannot harm you. The procedure below will help you gradually adjust to nasal CPAP.

1. Start by holding the nasal CPAP mask over your nose with your hand while you are awake, preferably sitting in a comfortable chair. Do not have the hose connected to the mask or use the headgear at this stage. Simply breathe in and out through the mask. If you start to feel closed in or otherwise uncomfortable, remove the mask briefly, then replace it when the feeling passes. When you are comfortable with the mask, go to the next step.
2. Attach the hose to the mask and to the CPAP machine. Turn the machine on (the medical equipment supplier will set the pressure for you), and place the nasal CPAP mask over your nose. Practice breathing in and out with a steady rhythm. If you start to feel uncomfortable, remove the mask briefly, then replace it when the feeling passes. It sometimes helps to read or watch TV during this time, as it provides some distraction. Some patients listen to music or relaxation tapes. When you are comfortable with the mask and the pressure, go to the next step.
3. Attach the headgear to the mask and practice wearing it with the pressure on. Again, if you become uncomfortable, take off the mask briefly, then replace it when the feeling passes. When you are comfortable doing so, try lying down in bed with the mask on. Close your eyes and practice breathing with a regular rhythm. When you are comfortable wearing the mask at this step, you are ready to use nasal CPAP. Ask your doctor to advise you on the next step, as it will probably be necessary for you to have a sleep study with nasal CPAP, so that the proper pressure for you can be determined during sleep.