

# TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR SLEEP APNEA

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Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) appears to be the best and most effective treatment for obstructive sleep apnea. CPAP flow generators develop a constant, controllable pressure to keep your upper airway open so that patients can breathe normally. CPAP is effective in 95% of the patients with obstructive sleep apnea if used properly. These units are reliable, quiet and efficient and come in a variety of sizes and shapes. The units induce controlled pressure through the nasal passage. This holds the soft tissue of the uvula and soft palate and the soft pharyngeal tissue in the upper airway in position so the airway remains open while you sleep.

There are typically three methods of inducing the pressure and airflow into the nasal cavity: nasal masks, nasal pillows and nasal seals. The most commonly used is the nasal mask. Most manufacturers offer a variety of styles. Nasal pillows are small oval-shaped latex rubber prongs that fit into the opening of the nostril. When fit properly they are very comfortable and seldom leak. Nasal seals fit against the opening of the nostril.

There are a few surgical options for Sleep Apnea. Probably the most effective surgery comparable to CPAP is the maxillomandibular advancement surgery. After a series of surgeries the cure rate for this procedure is approximately 90 percent. The surgeries are very extensive with high complication rates. Only a handful of oral surgeons in our country are well qualified to perform this surgery.

UPPP (Uvulopalatopharyngoplasty) is the next in line. This has a success rate of 40%. Complications are very high in the hands of inexperienced surgeons. As the patient ages and soft tissues become lax, apneas may return.

There are some oral appliances that are commercially available that can be used in mild cases of sleep apnea, but custom-made ones are better. These are made by dentists who have expertise in Dental Sleep Medicine and are qualified by American Dentists Sleep Association.

Sleep Apnea and other sleep related problems are treatable. It is important to treat these disorders since it affects not only the sleep pattern, but also leads to serious cardiovascular and other morbidities.

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