

## I have sleep apnea, now what?

Now that a diagnosis has been made, it is important to begin treating your sleep apnea. The most common treatment option is CPAP (Continuous Positive-Airway Pressure). Approximately 69% to 80% of people who have tried CPAP to relieve sleep apnea have been able to continue its use. If this does not work for you, there are other options available.

### Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP)

CPAP is used primarily to treat obstructive sleep apnea. It can also be used to treat central sleep apnea. Using CPAP involves wearing a mask over your nose, or nose and mouth, that is attached to a small air compressor with a piece of tubing. This pressure splints the airway open which helps to eliminate snoring and to maintain oxygen levels. The quality of sleep can improve significantly and people feel more rested when they awaken.

### Bi-Level Therapy (BPAP)

Bi-level Therapy is similar to nasal CPAP except that it delivers two pressures; the higher one while breathing in, and the lower pressure while breathing out. This is a more expensive option and is typically used for people who are unable to tolerate CPAP due to high pressures. There are also certain people with other medical issues who may benefit from BPAP rather than CPAP such as those with COPD.

***Treating sleep apnea does not always mean wearing CPAP. The goal is to treat the apnea however we can. Please talk to your health care clinician to discuss which method is most appropriate for you.***

***Some people may benefit from alternative therapies.***

### Positional Therapy

For some people, their sleep apnea is much worse when they sleep on their backs. Positional therapy helps you to sleep on your side or stomach. It can be as simple as sleeping with a wedge pillow or a body pillow. Some people sleep with a backpack stuffed with a pillow. There are specific snore shirts or positioning pillows available. There is also a prescription device that vibrates gently to encourage you to move from sleeping on your back to sleeping on your side without waking you up. This provides information on how often you use the device and how well it is working. This can be helpful if you have a job that requires you to show that your sleep apnea is well-treated.

### Oral Appliances

Oral Appliances open the airway by bringing the tongue and jaw forward. These devices may help reduce snoring and treat mild to moderate obstructive sleep apnea in certain individuals. These are best created by a dentist who specializes in dental sleep medicine and who works closely with the rest of the sleep team.

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### **Hypoglossal Nerve Stimulation**

Hypoglossal nerve stimulation is an FDA-cleared device that is effective in treating OSA in selected patients. A small generator, similar to a cardiac pacemaker, is placed in the chest wall with a lead going up the neck. It stimulates a nerve in the tongue called the hypoglossal nerve. When it is stimulated, it moves forward and alleviates the obstruction. There are certain criteria that must be met in order to undergo this treatment. Your sleep clinician can help you decide if this is appropriate for you.

### **Surgery**

Surgery is a fairly effective treatment for snoring and OSA in the right patient. It does not always “cure” sleep apnea but can make it easier to treat. Some people have trouble breathing through their nose and this makes CPAP therapy difficult to tolerate. Surgery can help with this. There are other procedures that can move the jaw forward and reduce or eliminate sleep apnea entirely. Each procedure is done for a specific purpose and your doctor can help you determine if surgery is appropriate and if so, which type of surgery would be the most helpful. They work with the surgical team to make sure that you hear from the experts who actually perform the procedures. Together, you can decide what makes sense for you.

***Sleep is essential to health. It helps our minds and our bodies perform at their best. There are many options available to treat sleep apnea. It is important to find a treatment option that works best for you and allows you to get healthy, restorative sleep.***