

OBTAINING CPAP

What does CPAP mean?

Continuous positive airway pressure, abbreviated to CPAP, is also known by other names which describe added features to the CPAP unit. Common abbreviations used are: Bi-Level, BiPAP, VPAP, adaptive ventilation, servo ventilation, etc. There are other various features such as ramping, expiratory pressure relief, humidification, heated tubing, AFlex, CFlex, timed CPAP, etc.

What do retailers do and how can they help? What should I look out for?

There are a number of reliable, responsible and ethical retailers scattered in the community to service your needs, and the Sleep and Respiratory Group works in tandem with many of these. A list of trusted and ethical CPAP therapy retail outlets is included below. In general, CPAP retailers should provide service and advice for the life of your product, and organise frequent appointments (or at least telephone calls) during those first crucial weeks and months when you are starting therapy. Retailers should be able to download data from your unit and give you general advice and feedback as to how CPAP therapy is working for you. Most CPAP retailers will give you back the rental fees that you have outlaid during the rental phase, should you purchase the unit. The following CPAP retailers have consistently shown excellent service to patients, with a full range of products, and have earned our recommendation:

- **CPAP Australia**
1/29 Princes Hwy, **Dandenong** (ph: 1300 69 2727)
- **CPAP Victoria**
Ph: 1300 750 006
463 Centre Rd, **Bentleigh**
30/A Clyde Road, **Berwick**
375 Bay St, **Port Melbourne**
68 Playne Street, **Frankston**
129 High Street, **Kew**
247 Stephenson's Road, **Mt Waverley**
- **City CPAP**
Suite 109, 365 Little Collins St, **Melbourne** (ph: 9600 0662)
- **CPAP Care**
8/330 High St, **Ashburton** (ph: 9885 9777)
1409 Burke Rd, **Kew East** (ph: 9078 9491)
Benchmark Corporate Centre, Suite 38, Level 1, 93 Wells Road, **Chelsea Heights** (ph: 8488 7212)
- **Brighton CPAP** (part of CPAP Care)
2-8 St Andrews St, **Brighton** (ph: 9097 7716)
 - **Terry White Chemmart Mildura**
T: 5021 2161
 - **Terry White Chemmart Narre Warren**
36 Webb St
T: 9704 7563

Unfortunately, some retail groups have commercial imperatives which may unduly influence you to buy higher-priced units, such as automatic units, or purchase equipment before you are ready. Some retailers will favour certain brands and occasionally only have limited brands available for you. Some retailers are also advertising themselves as one stop shops for sleep, when they have just sales staff rather than real sleep healthcare professionals.

Care needs to be taken, as some CPAP retailers will receive better discounts or margins on certain units. Some retailers have a higher upfront cost such as having to purchase masking and tubing with a rental, but this may be balanced by better service over the longer term.

I want to buy my equipment from the Internet as it is cheaper; why shouldn't I?

Online retailers rarely have adequate back-up with a bricks-and-mortar location for you to visit and troubleshoot, and consequently their prices may be cheaper. Due to lack of readily accessible support and follow-up, we generally discourage online CPAP purchases, unless you are sure you know what you are doing!

Troubleshooting and some specific issues

- There are three major brands of CPAP in Australia, and a couple of less well-known brands. The top three are Resmed, Philips Respironics, and Fisher & Paykel. They have a range of units with a selection of built-in recording and various comfort features. All come with integrated humidifiers either built-in or clicked on. The pitch of the motors may be a little different even though they are all very quiet.
- After a few months of treatment, there is often decongestion of the nose and the throat, and perhaps some weight loss, and CPAP can often be turned down slightly.
- If you are losing weight, often your facial structure slims down and its contours change. Therefore nasal and full face masks often may need readjustment, or an alternative cushion fitted.
- Sometimes, despite everyone's best efforts, masking proves difficult to make comfortable and alternative masking has to be used. Many retailers will try to swap this over but they are generally not obliged to and you may have to make a second mask purchase.
- In the laboratory, an attempt is made to get you onto the slimmest possible masking. The current range of slimline masks are discreet and comfortable but sometimes move a little more than fuller nasal masks, which have more of a contact area. Therefore, there is a trade-off between comfort and slimline masking, and more secure and firmer masking.
- Even if you are a mouth breather, most people will swap over to nasal breathing and contrary to their expectations, can often manage with just air delivered via the nose through a nasal mask, or nasal cushions. Don't be surprised if you are encouraged to do this by a retailer or in the laboratory. Sometimes a full mask is trialled, as well as a nasal mask, and both options are written down for you as part of your recommendation.
- Nasal irritation or blockage may occur and we use various sprays and inhalers to overcome this. Nozoil is a vitamin E based protectant which provides good relief of nasal irritation; often salty water spray is used many times during the day to keep the nose moist. Anti-hayfever nasal sprays are often useful, and sometimes more intensive treatment for nasal blockage may be required such as Rinair, or a visit to the surgeon.
- Most CPAP units have a guarantee for three years and should last for at least five years. It is not unusual for CPAP units to last ten years or more. All CPAP units ten years or older have been superseded by quieter CPAP units, with more comfort-related features built-in, as well as much better humidification systems. A failing CPAP unit typically becomes noisy as the brushings in the motor deteriorate, and may surge a loss of pressure or inaccurate delivery of pressure can be expected. Don't forget to change the filters regularly.
- Masks may last one to three years, but this is difficult to predict as facial oils and contact pressure will degrade them over time. Sometimes the soft plastic rips, comes loose, or occasionally hardens and becomes less comfortable. Strapping should in general be changed every year as it does lose its hold and elasticity.
- You will need to become proficient in pulling apart and cleaning your own masking, so don't be afraid to ask for help as to how to pull it apart and put it back together, and to loosen and tighten your strapping.
- Every once in a while, someone puts their mask together upside down, usually resulting in quite a bit of leakage and discomfort.