Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP)
**Introduction**

We breathe in order to take oxygen from the air to run our body. We then produce carbon dioxide as a waste gas, which we breathe out.

When a patient is unwell their oxygen levels can become too low.

Some patients also have trouble getting rid of carbon dioxide which then starts to build up in their blood.

Sometimes patients need help with their breathing through the use of a machine in order to correct their oxygen and carbon dioxide levels.

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**Further Information**

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty. If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01932 723553 or email pals@asph.nhs.uk. If you remain concerned, PALS can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.

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Version: 1  
Published: July 2012  
Review: July 2013
**How long will I need to use the CPAP?**

How long you need to use the CPAP machine for will depend upon the reason that you are unwell.

Most people will need to have CPAP constantly for the first 24 hours with short breaks for comfort, but as they get better will be able to have more time off the machine. This allows you to start to recover from your illness. Most people do not need the CPAP machine for more than 4 days.

Sometimes the underlying problem can be corrected more quickly and CPAP may only be needed for a few hours.

**Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP)**

For patients whose oxygen levels are low, extra oxygen can be given through an oxygen mask or nasal cannulae. For some patients this may not be enough and they need further help to increase their oxygen levels.

Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) can be used when oxygen alone is not sufficient to increase a patient’s oxygen to an acceptable level.

**What is CPAP and how does it work?**

CPAP works by blowing extra air into your lungs to help your breathing and improve your oxygen levels.

CPAP is generated by a machine and uses a cushioned mask attached to the machine via tubing. The mask fits over the nose and mouth and is held firmly in place by a strap. The mask can be removed easily to allow you to eat or drink.

Oxygen may also be given either through the machine or through tubing connected to the mask.
CPAP can be used in the treatment of many problems, for example:

- Pneumonia
- Following surgery
- Pulmonary oedema (fluid on the lungs)
- Pulmonary embolus (blood clot in the lungs)
- Sleep apnoea

What happens if I need CPAP?

The specialist physiotherapist, nurse or doctor may take a blood sample from your wrist called an arterial blood gas (ABG).

If it is decided that CPAP is required, the doctor will discuss the treatment with you and your family. It will be decided before you start treatment what the course of action should be if the CPAP fails to improve your condition.

The machine will then be set up by the specialist physiotherapist, nurse or doctor. You will be monitored closely to ensure that the machine is on the correct settings to improve your breathing.

Using the CPAP may feel strange to begin with but most people find that they get used to it fairly quickly. The physiotherapist, nurse or doctor will spend time with you to help you get used to the mask and the sensation of the air blowing at you.