

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Continuous positive airway pressure for obstructive sleep apnoea/hypopnoea syndrome

NICE 'technology appraisal guidance' advises on when and how drugs and other treatments should be used in the NHS.

This leaflet is about when **continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP)** should be used to treat adults with obstructive sleep apnoea/hypopnoea syndrome (sleep apnoea) in the NHS in England and Wales. It explains guidance (advice) from NICE (the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence). It is written for people with sleep apnoea but it may also be useful for their families or carers or anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe sleep apnoea or the treatment in detail – your specialist should discuss these with you. Some sources of further information and support are on the back page.

This may not be the only possible treatment for sleep apnoea. Your specialist should talk to you about whether it is suitable for you and about other treatment options available.

What has NICE said?

CPAP is recommended as a possible treatment for adults with moderate or severe sleep apnoea.

CPAP may also be a possible treatment for people with mild sleep apnoea, but only if:

- their symptoms affect their quality of life and ability to go about their daily activities, **and**
- lifestyle advice (for example about losing weight, stopping smoking and cutting down on alcohol) and all other possible treatments have not worked or are not appropriate for that person.

A person with sleep apnoea should be assessed and treated by a specialist in sleep disorders.

Sleep apnoea

Obstructive sleep apnoea/hypopnoea syndrome is a condition in which a person stops breathing for a short time when they are asleep because of closing or narrowing of the throat. This can happen many times during the night, and causes the person to wake up for very short periods to allow normal breathing to restart (although usually the person won't remember waking up). A person with sleep apnoea often snores, may be unusually sleepy during the day and may have problems in concentrating because of lack of sleep. Partners of people with sleep apnoea also often have disturbed sleep.

Continuous positive airway pressure

A CPAP device consists of a mask that is worn by the person during sleep, which is connected to a pump that creates a flow of air. This airflow is slightly pressurised, which stops the person's throat from closing or narrowing during sleep.

What does this mean for me?

When NICE recommends a treatment, the NHS must ensure it is available to those people it could help, normally within 3 months of the guidance being issued. So, if you have moderate or severe sleep apnoea, or if you have mild sleep apnoea and lifestyle advice and other treatments have not worked, you should be able to have treatment with CPAP on the NHS. Please see www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance if you appear to be eligible for the treatment but it is not available.

More information

The organisation below can provide more information and support for people with sleep apnoea. Please note that NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by this organisation.

- The Sleep Apnoea Trust, 0845 606 0685
www.sleep-apnoea-trust.org

NHS Direct online (www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) may be a good starting point for finding out more. Your local Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) may also be able to give you further advice and support.

About NICE

NICE produces guidance (advice) for the NHS about preventing, diagnosing and treating different medical conditions. The guidance is written by independent experts including healthcare professionals and people representing patients and carers. They consider all the research on the disease or treatment, talk to people affected by it, and consider the costs involved. Staff working in the NHS are expected to follow this guidance.

To find out more about NICE, its work and how it reaches decisions, see www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance

This leaflet and other versions of the guidance aimed at healthcare professionals are available at www.nice.org.uk/TA139

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from NICE publications (phone 0845 003 7783 or email publications@nice.org.uk and quote reference N1494).

We encourage NHS and voluntary sector organisations to use text from this leaflet in their own information about sleep apnoea.