

PAP MASKS

PAP (Positive Airway Pressure) masks are like shoes—there are many styles and sizes available, and it might take time to find a mask that fits you as comfortably as possible.

Types of masks

Ask your provider to show you different options. All masks fit all machines, even if they are made by different companies, so you can mix and match. Your main options are:

Nasal masks →
Cover your entire nose.



← **Nasal "pillows"**
Sit just below the nose and only cover your nostrils. Some patients prefer nasal pillows because of their small size and light weight.

Full-face masks →
Covers both your nose and mouth.



Resources

American Thoracic Society:
[Positive Airway Pressure for Adults with Obstructive Sleep Apnea](#)

What is a proper fit?

The mask should make an airtight or close-to-airtight seal where it touches your skin. This will ensure that the PAP machine can deliver the right level of pressure.

To ensure a proper mask fit:

- 1. Check for leaks.** First, turn the machine on and hold your hand in front of the mask. You will be able to feel a gentle stream of air from the front of the mask. Second, put the mask on and check where your mask touches your skin. You should not feel any air coming out from where the mask touches your skin. If you can feel air leaving, there is a leak.
- 2. Check your straps.** It should be easy to fit 2-3 fingers between the straps and your face/head. If your straps are too tight, they will cause skin redness or headaches. Your mask should fit as tight as a bike helmet—not loose, but not too tight. The straps should sit flat against your face and head. If the straps are folded or twisted, take them off and re-attach them.
- 3. Check your seal.** PAP masks seal on the skin with silicon/plastic. If you notice that this material has kinked or bunched, pull the mask away from your face, then allow it to gently settle back onto the skin.
- 4. If you have a chinstrap,** put your chinstrap on before your mask. The chinstrap does not have to be tight—gentle pressure under the chin is usually enough. If your mouth continues to open, you might need to try a mask that covers your mouth as well as your nose.
- 5. The best mask is the one you can wear every night.** Speak to your doctor or DME if your mask doesn't fit you.
- 6. Having trouble with your PAP mask fit?** Check out [Infosheet 8: Troubleshooting your PAP.](#)