

- Follow your health care providers' directions when using a nasal CPAP or Bi-level PAP device.
- Focus on the health benefits of using sleep apnea equipment (Note: using the equipment is not a cure. It is treatment that only works if you wear it or use it properly).

- Keep your equipment clean to avoid respiratory infections.
- If you are overweight, talk with your medical provider about losing weight.
- If you smoke, consider quitting.
- Avoid alcohol

Green Flags — All Clear

What this means...

If you:

- Use sleep apnea equipment properly
- Are not experiencing daytime sleepiness, tiredness, or fatigue
- Are maintaining a healthy weight

- Good work!
- Your symptoms are under control.

Keep up the great work!

Yellow Flags — Caution

What this means...

If you have any of the following:

- Have difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Have excessive daytime sleepiness
- Loud snoring that disturbs your sleep or the sleep of others
- Intermittent pauses in your breathing during sleep
- Episodes when you stop breathing witnessed by another person
- Excess weight
- A narrow throat or have been told you have tonsils or adenoids that are enlarged
- Have been diagnosed with sleep apnea and do not use the sleep machine prescribed by your health provider

- You could need an adjustment to your sleep apnea machine
- You may need a treatment adjustment
- Consider the pros/cons of using the equipment

Call your doctor, consulting nurse, or healthcare provider if symptoms do not improve.

Name:

Number:

Instructions:

If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team.

Red Flags—Stop and Think

What this means...

If you:

- Have chest pain
- Have shortness of breath
- Fall asleep during the day or even while driving

This indicates you need to be seen by a healthcare professional immediately.

Name:

Number:

Follow these instructions: **CALL 9-1-1.**

If you notice a Red Flag, call 9-1-1. Emergency!

Sleep Apnea Fast Facts

- Sleep apnea is when you have brief interruptions in breathing during sleep. The episodes usually last 10 seconds or more and occur repeatedly throughout the night.
- In untreated sleep apnea, breathing is briefly interrupted or becomes very shallow during sleep. These breathing pauses typically last between 10 to 20 seconds and can occur up to hundreds of times a night, jolting you out of your natural sleep rhythm. As a consequence, you spend more time in light sleep and less time in the deep, restorative sleep you need to be energetic, mentally sharp, and productive the next day.
- Chronic sleep deprivation results in daytime sleepiness, slow reflexes, poor concentration, and an increased risk of accidents. Sleep apnea can also lead to serious health problems over time, including diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, impotence, headaches, memory problems, weight gain, and car accidents.
- Sleep apnea can be a serious or even a life-threatening medical problem.
- Obstructive sleep apnea is the most common type. It occurs when the soft tissue in the back of your throat relaxes during sleep and blocks the airway, often causing you to snore loudly.
- Risk factors include being male, overweight, and over the age of 40, however it can be seen in anyone at any age, even children.

What can you do?

- Talk with your health care provider about what type of sleep apnea you have.
- If your medical provider recommends a C-Pap or VPAP device, use it regularly. If you have difficulty using the device, talk openly with your health care provider. They may be able to recommend a different type of mask or can adjust your equipment.
- Keeping your respiratory equipment clean and disinfected. Since any machine can gather dust and dirt, it's important to keep your equipment clean. This will help reduce infections, too.
- Make lifestyle changes. Avoid alcohol since it relaxes the muscles in the back of the throat and this makes it easier for the airway to become blocked if you have obstructive sleep apnea.
- If you smoke, consider quitting. Smoking is believed to contribute to sleep apnea by increasing inflammation and fluid that stays in your throat and upper airway.
- Avoid caffeine and heavy meals within two hours of going to bed.
- If you are overweight, consider losing weight. Losing just 10% of body weight can have an effect on sleep apnea symptoms.
- Sleep on your side, if possible. Avoid sleeping on your back, as gravity makes it more likely for your tongue and soft tissues to block your airway.

Southeast Washington Aging and Long Term Care

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