



# Homecare Classroom on Sleep Apnea

ISSUE 24

## How Does CPAP Affect Your Sex Life

When you first start using CPAP to treat your sleep apnea, you may initially panic about how the mask and machine will impact your sex life. On a superficial basis, you may worry about how it makes you look. You may feel like the apparatus makes you appear like a cross between Darth Vader, an elephant, and a robot. In short, you may feel unattractive. Truth be told, this initial hurdle is cleared quickly. Talk about your concerns with your loved one, see how they feel, and quickly move on. Anyone who loves you, anyone with whom you wish to be intimate, will accept you and respect your medical needs.



In fact, the CPAP may be the first step toward rekindling your love life. Often loud snoring and sleep apnea may lead to nighttime relationship problems, including sleeping in separate sleep spaces. If you are in separate bedrooms, the chance for intimacy diminishes. By resolving these issues by using CPAP, your partner may decide to rejoin you in bed, thus setting up new opportunities.

The introduction of the CPAP to a sexual partner may recur if you have new partners. Though you may initially feel embarrassed and fight through these same feelings again, this will get easier as you become comfortable with CPAP and yourself.

## Starting to Feel More Frisky

As you start to use your CPAP on a regular basis, you may begin to notice some changes in how it makes you feel. Some of the symptoms that prompted you to seek diagnosis and treatment of your sleep apnea may improve. For example, most people have improved energy levels and decreased excessive daytime sleepiness. These improvements may leave you feeling more frisky and more interested in sex.

Treating your sleep disorder may have real physiological impacts on your libido. Sleep apnea has been associated with low testosterone levels in men and using CPAP may help reverse this. In addition, you may have decreased irritability and improved mood with treatment. This new attitude may lead to more interest on the part of your sexual partner as well.

## Long-Term CPAP Use and Romance

Once you have overcome the initial adjustment and start to see some benefits from using the CPAP, you may still face some long-term issues related to CPAP and its impact on your sex life.

Some people worry about the CPAP mask and machine becoming a barrier to intimacy. By putting on the mask, you may feel like you are signaling disinterest in sex. It may seem as if you are saying, "I'm sleeping now." Certainly this can be true, but it doesn't have to be an absolute. Be flexible. Let your partner know that the mask can always be taken back off. Through some combination of spontaneity and planning, there is no reason why you can't have a normal sex life. In many ways, CPAP can actually improve intimacy with your loved one. That leads to two reasons to keep using and being compliant with CPAP: for health and for love.

Writer background: Brandon Peters, M.D. is a board-certified neurology sleep medicine specialist who currently practices at Pulmonary and Sleep Associates of Marin in Novato, Calif. and serves as a Consulting Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University's School of Medicine. His interest in sleep began when he was in college and he has a wide breadth of clinical and research experiences.

Source: How Does CPAP Affect Your Sex Life? By Brandon Peters, M.D. updated April 17, 2014

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