



A guide to travelling with sleep apnoea (QEHB)

There is no reason why having sleep apnoea should severely limit travelling options. This guide has been designed to make travelling with continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) straightforward and provides information which you may find useful relating to:

- Where you travel – UK and overseas
- How you travel i.e. road, rail, air, sea or bus
- Accommodation i.e. hotel, camping/caravan park, boat and with family/friends
- Other considerations

UK travel

Modern CPAP equipment is usually portable and supplied with its own carrying case so there should be no issues with travel within the UK via all modes of transport.

These devices are medical equipment and should be carried as hand luggage and not placed in the hold of the aircraft (as this can damage the machine).

For domestic flights, it is likely the machine will count towards your hand luggage weight and item number allowance. We advise you contact the airline you are travelling with to find out more about their medical equipment and baggage allowance policy as it can differ between companies.

To ensure smooth passage through check-in, security, and customs, please contact the Lung Function and Sleep (LF&S) team who can provide a personalised letter about your machine to take with you. This letter will include your details and the serial number of the CPAP. Please request this well in advance of your journey. Please also note your machine can pass through the X-ray machine at the airport unaffected.

Overseas

Air

The advice for international flights is the same as for domestic flights. However, there are some additional considerations.

You may want to use CPAP on the aircraft particularly on long-haul flights and this should be possible - it is advisable to contact the airline at least 2 weeks in advance to discuss this. There is no reason why the airline should refuse use but, if you experience problems, it is best to contact their technical department who may ask for a form to be completed relating to your particular machine. Most CPAP manufacturers have an aviation authority statement related to the suitability of the device for use on aircraft. This is usually available via their website. If the airline provides you with a letter from their own medical services giving permission to use CPAP during flight, remember to take this with you.

Also remember to arrange seating near a power supply and confirm the type of power cord/adaptor required on the plane.

Please note: Do not use a humidifier during flight as per manufacturer's recommendations.

Cruise ships

There should be a suitable power supply available but contact the tour operator in advance to make sure. Your CPAP machine will require a power supply between 100-240V and 50-60Hz to work. Power sockets can differ between countries, so make sure you pack an appropriate adapter.

Boats and yachts

Most marinas and vessels have a mains power supply, but it is always worth checking before booking anything to ensure a power source is available. You may need a DC/DC converter to ensure the CPAP runs from the correct voltage.

Bus/coach

It is unlikely a power supply will be available on a bus or coach for use on long journeys. There may be the possibility of using a battery pack, therefore please check the coach company first before travelling.

Train

Power supplies may be available on sleeper trains but always check with the train company concerned prior to travel.

Where you are staying

Indoors

The main consideration for staying away from home is access to power supply. Most indoor residences have easy access to a power supply, so this should not be a problem. However, it is advisable to take an extension lead in case sockets are not available by the bedside. It is advisable to contact your hotel or guest house in advance to inform them of your requirements as they may be able to assign you a more suitable room.

Camping and caravanning

Most caravan sites have a mains electricity supply, as do some tent pitches. Alternatively, CPAP device can be powered from a car or other vehicle with a 12V or 24V DC power source or compatible battery pack (always check the CPAP user guide) – you'll likely need a DC/DC power converter to use these power sources, but take care not to drain the battery (it is not recommended to use the humidifier if running CPAP from a car battery).

Batteries

The Lung Function and Sleep department do not provide batteries for use with CPAP machines nor does our current CPAP supplier, Resmed.

There are two options for running your CPAP from an external power source; (i) from a car battery (lead acid types) or (ii) you can purchase lightweight lithium batteries. Lithium batteries tend to be quite expensive to buy but can be hired from certain manufacturers (arrange well in advance as they have a limited number) and may prove to be the most cost-effective and practical alternative (Nb. Airlines will not carry lead batteries). Please confirm with the manufacturer from whom you are sourcing the battery that it is compatible with your CPAP device.

You will also need to make arrangements to charge the batteries. Car batteries can often be charged at a local garage. Alternatively, a mains charger for the particular battery type is an option if available. Solar chargers are also a possibility, but these are very expensive and only cost-effective if used regularly. They also need a charge controller to prevent over charging which can damage the battery.

Certain CPAP machines operate on AC power, so an inverter is required to run them off a DC power supply (e.g. car battery) An inverter changes a low voltage direct current into a mains level alternating current (DC to AC).

To determine if your own CPAP device would require either a DC/DC converter or DC/AC inverter to run off any of the power source listed above, please check with the manufacturer of your machine.

High altitude

If staying at high altitude, adjustments may be required to your machine to compensate for lower air pressure. Most machines are designed to operate at altitudes up to 2591m. However, please contact your CPAP manufacturer for further advice if required.

Other considerations

Health and travel

If you have co-existing conditions such as heart or lung disease, check with your GP about any special precautions advised for the area of travel. If you have any specific concerns about travelling with sleep apnoea, please discuss this with your GP.

It is also advisable to contact your travel insurance company to inform them of your condition as non-disclosure could invalidate your insurance. They may ask questions about your condition so be prepared by having details to hand when you contact them.

Hygiene

Be extra thorough when travelling abroad, particularly to warm climates where bacteria and fungi grow more readily. Following your usual cleaning regime (soap and water) should be sufficient (this is usually explained at the time of CPAP issue in LF&S) but please take extra care when using a humidifier and remember to dry things thoroughly before use. This is particularly important

for tubes and masks, as well as head and chin straps which, when sweat-soaked, can cause skin problems.

Water supplies in some countries abroad may not be purified or hygienic. It is recommended to clean and rinse equipment in either (i) filtered water, (ii) water purified with water purification tablets, or (iii) drinkable bottled water.

Useful spares

- Electrical socket extension lead
- Travel adaptor, suitable to the country/countries of travel
- Spare fuses and screwdriver for the plug
- Insulating tape for repairing hose damage
- Surge protector - these are recommended for home use with CPAP

Overseas travel

Power supplies

Before travelling, it is very important that you check what type of power is available at your destination, specifically the voltage. This is variable across the world. In the UK, the mains supply is 220 to 240 volts, so this is the voltage your CPAP machine will be designed to run off. Some parts of the world use 110-volt systems. Most CPAP machines have a range of 100 to 240 volts and adjusting automatically to change. Others require a voltage switch to be changed. The majority of the machines supply by Lung Function and Sleep change automatically but, if in doubt, check with the manufacturer.

If you are travelling to less populated or remote areas, check that a power supply is available. Be aware that the power supply may be unreliable with possible interruptions. You should check if the hotel has a generator and, if so, whether it runs all night. You may need to take a battery if the power is unreliable (see relevant section earlier in this guide).

Quick reference check list

Make sure you have the following arranged before travelling:

- Power supply
- Spares
- Travel company contact
- Health insurance
- Travel documents i.e. CPAP airline letter
- Contact number of machine manufacturer

Useful contacts

ResMed (UK) Ltd

Telephone: **01235 862 997**

Website: <https://www.resmed.co.uk/patient/living-with-sleep-apnoea/travelling-with-cpap/>

Lung Function and Sleep

Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham

Telephone: **0121 371 3870**. (Monday - Friday, 09:00 - 17:00)

Email: CPAPEnquiries@uhb.nhs.uk

Sleep Apnoea Trust

Provides advice for patients with sleep apnoea.

Website: www.sleep-apnoea-trust.org

Email: Info@sleep-apnoea-trust.org

Accessibility

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