

# Why you need a CPAP machine



**YOUR  
HEALTH**

**DR GITA MATHAI**

**Q** I have trouble sleeping. I wake up feeling unrefreshed, groggy and irritable. I underwent a sleep study and the doctors recommended that I use a CPAP machine.

The sleep study has probably diagnosed you with obstructive sleep apnoea, a condition in which your breathing repeatedly stops or is severely reduced during sleep. Each episode briefly wakes you up, even if you are unaware of it, preventing you from getting deep, restorative sleep.

Sleep apnoea is not just a cause of daytime fatigue. During these breathing pauses, the oxygen level in your blood can fall, increasing the risk of high blood pressure, abnormal heart rhythms, heart attacks, strokes and in severe cases, sudden death.

A CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machine keeps your airway open by delivering a steady stream of air through a mask, preventing these breathing interruptions. Regular use can improve sleep quality, reduce daytime sleepiness and significantly lower the risk of serious complications. Although it may take a few days or weeks to get used to the device, most people find that the benefits far outweigh the inconvenience.

## Age spots

**Q** I have some discolouration on my face. I visited a dermatologist who suggested several expensive treatments, including laser therapy, dermabrasion and chemical peels. Is there anything I can do at home?

Try applying a facial serum containing niacinamide every night. It may take weeks or even months to show improvement, but many people find it effective in reducing pigmentation and evening out skin tone. Be patient and use it consistently.

Also apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen every morning, as sun

exposure can worsen discolouration and reduce the effectiveness of treatment. For special occasions or events, a concealer and light make-up can help camouflage the affected areas. If the pigmentation persists or worsens, consult your dermatologist.

## Fresh milk

**Q** I have switched to a diet of uncooked food and drink raw milk from a neighbourhood cow. My wife says it is not safe.

Your wife is right to be cautious. Milk straight from the cow may look wholesome but it can contain harmful bacteria as well as other disease-causing organisms. These can lead to severe diarrhoea, fever and life-threatening infections. Boiling or pasteurising milk kills these germs. The slight loss of vitamins is far outweighed by the protection it provides against illness.

If you prefer milk from a local cow, the safest approach is to boil it before drinking.

## Deviated septum

**Q** My nose is crooked, and one nostril always feels blocked. Is surgical correction my only option?

A crooked nose is often caused by a deviated

nasal septum, in which case the wall dividing the two nostrils is displaced to one side. If the blockage is mild, symptoms may improve with saline nasal sprays, steam inhalation, allergy treatment or prescribed nasal steroid sprays. This deserves a trial before you opt for surgery.

However, if the obstruction causes recurrent sinus infections, snoring, sleep disturbance or difficulty breathing, surgery may be required.

## Ice cream issue

**Q** I suffer from diarrhoea every time I eat ice cream.

You may have lactose intolerance, which means you cannot digest lactose. Bacteria in the large intestine ferment it, causing bloating, abdominal cramps, gas and diarrhoea.

Avoid ice cream and other dairy products for a few weeks to see if your symptoms improve.

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The writer has a family practice at Vellore and is the author of *Staying Healthy in Modern India*. If you have any questions on health issues, please write to [yourhealthgm@yahoo.co.in](mailto:yourhealthgm@yahoo.co.in)