

# The Top 10 Alternative Sleep Apnea Treatments For A Better Night's Sleep

## 10 Groundbreaking Alternatives to Traditional CPAP Treatment

Continuous positive airway pressure, commonly known as CPAP, is the most common treatment for sleep apnea and is recommended by nearly all sleep specialists. CPAP machines can be a little uncomfortable though, and many patients with sleep apnea may find the mask and tubes intrusive while they are sleeping. Many patients choose to find alternatives to using a CPAP machine to avoid this discomfort.

Alternatives to CPAP therapy to treat sleep apnea can vary. From changes to your lifestyle, including dieting and exercise, to surgery that can be expensive and painful. Others, like the BiPAP, try to replicate the CPAP as closely as possible while removing some discomfort.

Ultimately though, before you decide to give up on your CPAP, you should talk with your doctor or a sleep apnea specialist to determine your best course of action. Surgery and other treatments may not be viable options for certain patients, so be sure to speak with a professional before making any decisions. Alternatively, they may determine that these options are unnecessary for you and suggest a less invasive option.

Below are ten alternative sleep apnea treatments for you to consider with your doctor if you are unhappy with your CPAP treatment.

### Oral appliances

Many people with sleep apnea find oral appliances to be much less intrusive than CPAP. Oral appliances to treat sleep apnea most commonly work by holding the tongue in place or moving the jaw forward to help a patient continue breathing while they sleep. Oral appliances can be useful for many patients with sleep apnea, but if your sleep apnea is more severe, you may need to take further action and seek additional treatment.

One of the most common types of oral appliance is called a mandibular advancement appliance. This device pushes the jaw forward to increase your airways' size to relieve sleep apnea and snoring.

Besides this example, there are over 100 different oral appliances to treat sleep apnea approved by the FDA. Most of them look like a mouth guard that you would use to play sports and are much more comfortable and tolerable than a CPAP machine. Oral appliances work best

when they are fitted for your mouth, so make sure you check with your doctor frequently so that your oral device can continue to help you deal with the symptoms of sleep apnea.

## Oral Surgery

Many different oral surgeries are available to help treat sleep apnea. Many of the most common surgeries involve removing extra tissue from the inside of the throat. Still, oral surgeons may also perform surgery on the jaw, tongue, soft palate, and uvula.

The most common surgeries to treat sleep apnea require tissue removal from the inside of the throat. There are a few different kinds of surgery though, some of which are good for mild to moderate sleep apnea and others for severe sleep apnea.

One common surgery that is good for treating mild sleep apnea is a uvulectomy or UP3. During a UP3 surgery, a surgeon removes tissue from the soft palate to expand the airway to allow air to pass more freely. Patients with mild to moderate sleep apnea could also consider nasal surgery if they have a deviated septum or polyps. If you have polyps or even a deviated septum, they could be contributing to your sleep apnea.

Other surgeries, like GGA, MMA, and MME, all deal with the face's bones to help enable breathing while the patient sleeps. In an MMA, the upper and lower jawbones are elongated and moved forward. In an MME, the jawbones are widened through surgery and the use of orthodontic appliances. Finally, a GGA is necessary when the airway collapses behind the tongue. In a GGA, a surgeon will pull the chin bone and tongue forward to increase the airway's size to enable the patient to breathe while they are sleeping.

Overall, surgery may not be the best option for many patients and requires lengthy discussion with a sleep apnea professional. Patients who undergo surgery to relieve sleep apnea symptoms may deal with pain, bleeding, swelling, and severe discomfort. Patients may also need to have their jaws wired shut for several days and will likely be on a very restricted diet for weeks to recover from surgery. Also, the benefits of surgery for treating sleep apnea are not permanent, and patients who have sought surgery in the past are likely to suffer from sleep apnea again in the future.

## Inspire Therapy

Inspire therapy is a unique, innovative treatment for severe sleep apnea. Inspire therapy involves making three incisions into the patient's chest to install hardware and electronics to help the patient breathe—a generator, a stimulation lead, and a breathing sensor lead. Before going to bed, the patient will turn the device on, which will monitor their breathing and stimulate muscles that will open their airway. The device itself is battery powered and runs for eight hours.

Unfortunately, inspire therapy is not available to everyone, and there are a few requirements patients must meet to have this procedure done. Patients seeking this treatment must be above 22, have moderate to severe sleep apnea, have a BMI below 32, and be unable to use or get consistent benefit from a CPAP machine. If you are unsure whether inspire therapy is a good fit for you, talk to your doctor and see what they recommend!

## Weight loss

Some sleep apnea can be caused by being overweight. If an overweight patient is experiencing sleep apnea symptoms, they could benefit from undergoing dietary changes and other lifestyle changes to help lose weight.

Many patients with sleep apnea will choose exercise and seek help from dietary specialists to help them deal with their sleep apnea symptoms. This is a popular alternative to CPAP treatment because of the additional health benefits associated with weight loss. Also, patients who choose to lose weight to treat sleep apnea only need to lose approximately 10% of their body weight to treat the symptoms or eliminate them altogether.

If diet and exercise are not enough to help with weight loss, check with a doctor to see if you are a candidate for bariatric surgery. Bariatric surgery is a procedure that makes changes to your digestive system to help with weight loss. Some bariatric surgeries involve a reduction in the stomach's size, while others make changes to the small intestine: the organ that extracts nutrients from food and drinks.

If you're struggling with weight loss to treat sleep apnea, talk with a doctor to discuss all of your options. They may recommend you to a dietary specialist, or they may encourage you to get a gym membership or contact a personal trainer. If these don't help, they can recommend you to a surgeon for bariatric surgery to deal with your sleep apnea symptoms.

If you seek surgery to help with weight loss, remember that getting bariatric surgery does not help you form and maintain healthy eating and exercise habits to prevent you from gaining back the weight that you lost. Weight loss takes some work and determination, but the health benefits concerning sleep apnea and beyond make it worthwhile.

## Change unhealthy habits

Lifestyle factors other than weight can contribute to sleep apnea. Drinking alcohol contributes to sleep apnea by causing the upper airway muscles to relax— making it difficult to breathe and prevent you from getting a full night's sleep. Avoid alcohol to prevent symptoms of sleep apnea.

Another common unhealthy habit that can contribute to sleep apnea is smoking. Smokers are much more likely to experience the symptoms of sleep apnea because smoking can cause

inflammation and fluid retention in the upper airway. Try to quit smoking to reduce this inflammation and lessen the severity of your sleep apnea symptoms.

If you are having difficulty stopping some of your unhealthy habits that contribute to your sleep apnea, your doctor may recommend cognitive behavioral therapy. A behavioral therapist can help you find the reasons you are having difficulty stopping unhealthy habits and helping you make an effort to quit them. Behavioral therapists can also help you overcome other reasons you may not sleep, like intrusive thoughts and feelings.

## Tonsil and adenoid removal

If large tonsils and adenoids cause your sleep apnea, an easy solution is to remove them. Tonsils and adenoids need to be removed if they inhibit breathing and cause snoring. Check with your doctor to see if this is a viable option for you.

## Bilevel Positive Airway Pressure (BiPAP)

BiPAP machines work very similarly to CPAP machines to help stimulate breathing while you are asleep. Many patients consider the BiPAP to be much more comfortable because it changes the amount of oxygen it provides as you breathe. When you breathe in, the BiPAP will increase the amount of oxygen it is providing you with, and when you breathe out, the flow will decrease, so it is easier to exhale.

BiPAP machines are best for patients with severe sleep apnea who find CPAP machines to be intolerable. If you're suffering from sleep apnea and dislike the feeling of a CPAP, talk to your doctor about getting a BiPAP machine instead.

## Positional Therapy

Positional therapy can be an effective treatment to relieve the symptoms of sleep apnea. This type of treatment is designed to treat patients who primarily experience sleep apnea when sleeping on their backs. When these patients sleep on their sides, they no longer experience sleep apnea.

Positional therapy varies by person, but it often requires wearing a device around your waist to keep you on your side while you are sleeping. This treatment is most effective for patients with mild or moderate sleep apnea who can't tolerate CPAP. Also, note that this treatment does not work for every patient with sleep apnea; this treatment is specific to positional sleep apnea.

## Exercise

Another alternative treatment for sleep apnea that has many other benefits that come along with it is exercise. Frequent exercise can help with weight loss and can help make the symptoms of sleep apnea less severe.

To get the most out of exercising to help treat sleep apnea, try to stick with aerobic exercises like running or swimming to maximize weight loss. If you need some help or additional guidance, seek a personal trainer who can help you cut weight fast to deal with your sleep apnea.

## Relieve Congestion

A straightforward treatment that can be effective against minor to moderate sleep apnea symptoms is relieving congestion. Try using medications that relax the nasal passages to help relieve congestion and make it easier to breathe. This is a quick fix that you should rely on only if you have minor sleep apnea. Severe sleep apnea requires further treatment, and you should continue to try other alternative therapies or talk to a doctor to find out any other options that could work for you.

## Conclusions

Sleep apnea is a common affliction— it is estimated that over 20 million Americans are suffering from the symptoms of sleep apnea. These symptoms can potentially be detrimental to your daily life and can impact your ability to sleep, work, and even retain information. There's no need to continue suffering; there are currently various treatment options available to help improve your sleep apnea symptoms, and even your overall quality of life.

If you're frustrated with your CPAP machine, remember that you are not alone and that there are many alternative treatments to try. Some treatments, like surgery, are expensive but deal directly with the things causing your sleep apnea. Others like exercise and dietary changes are much less invasive and can be effective for minor to moderate sleep apnea.

If you aren't quite sure what's right for you, talk with your doctor about alternative treatments for sleep apnea and what may work best for you. They will be able to point you in the right direction and offer guidance on the best way to go about treating your sleep apnea without a CPAP machine.