



DOWN SYNDROME PROGRAM  
[www.massgeneral.org/downsyndrome](http://www.massgeneral.org/downsyndrome)

# Treatments for Obstructive Sleep Apnea

Everyone's obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) is different. That means your doctor can help find a treatment for OSA that is right for you. Below is a list of treatments for OSA.

## TREATMENTS FOR OSA

- **Lifestyle therapy**  
With **lifestyle therapy**, your doctor helps you make healthy changes to how you eat and encourage you to exercise. **Obesity** (weighing more than usual) can cause OSA or make it worse. Losing weight, eating healthier food and exercising can help treat OSA.
- **Positional therapy**  
With **positional therapy**, your doctor helps you find ways to sleep that can help ease your OSA symptoms. This might mean sleeping on your side or stomach, rather than your back.
- **Dental devices**  
**Dental devices** help keep your teeth, jaw, and tongue in a position that can help improve your OSA symptoms. Ask your dentist which dental devices can help you. There are lots of dental devices to choose from. They do not hurt, but they can take time to get used to.
- **Mask therapy**  
A **breathing mask** blows warm, moist air into your airway to keep it open while you sleep. Your **airway** is the path your breath takes into your lungs when you breathe. There are lots of different masks. The masks do not hurt, but they can take some time to get used to.
- **Tonsillectomy or adenoidectomy**  
Sometimes, **tonsils** or **adenoids** (glands in your throat that protect you from germs) can grow very large and cause OSA. With a tonsillectomy or adenoidectomy, an **ear, nose and throat (ENT) doctor** removes your tonsils or adenoids. Your body will be still strong enough to fight off germs after removing your big tonsils or adenoids.

- **Upper airway surgery**  
With **upper airway surgery**, a doctor removes extra tissue that is causing your OSA. The surgery is done by an ENT doctor or an **oromaxillofacial (mouth and jaw) surgeon**.
- **Hypoglossal nerve stimulator**  
A **hypoglossal nerve stimulator** is only for people with very bad OSA who cannot wear a breathing mask. This requires a small surgery. It helps keep your airway open by telling your tongue to move forward so you can breathe easier. You will need surgery to have a doctor or surgeon put in the hypoglossal nerve stimulator. This can be expensive and is not always covered by insurance.

### *What are the different types of breathing masks?*

If your doctor suggests mask therapy for your OSA, there are 3 different types of breathing masks. Your doctor will help you choose the right one for you.

- **CPAP mask**  
A **CPAP mask** blows a steady (ongoing) stream of air into your airway while you sleep.
- **BiPAP mask**  
A **BiPAP mask** adjusts the stream of air as you breathe in and out. It gives more air as you breathe in and less air as you breathe out.
- **AutoPAP**  
An **AutoPAP mask** adjusts the stream of air as you breathe in and out.