

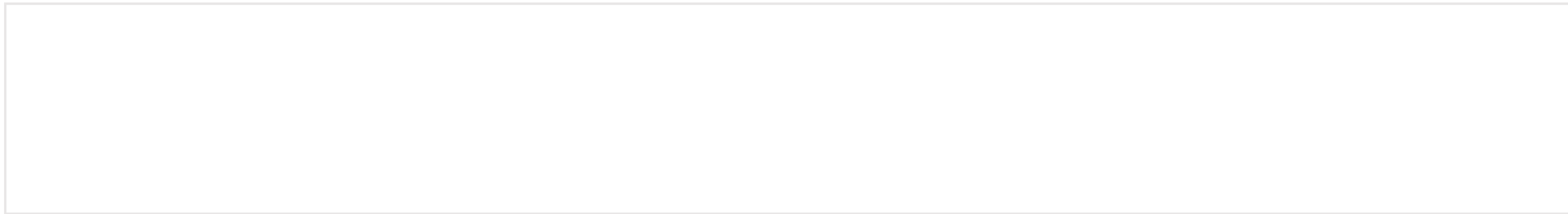


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Sleep Apnea Machine May Cause Facial Changes

Study Shows nCPAP Machine May Cause Temporary Changes in Facial Structure

By Katrina Woznicki



FROM THE WEBMD ARCHIVES

Oct. 5, 2010 -- Repeated use of nasal continuous positive airway pressure (nCPAP) machines to treat [obstructive sleep apnea](#) may have some side effects on facial structure, a study shows.

But researchers did not report any permanent damage to the face from the machines.

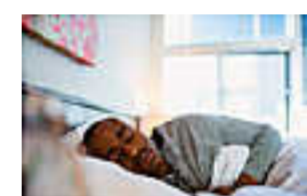
Researchers at Kyushu University Hospital in Fukuoka, Japan, and at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, studied 46 adults, 89% of them male, with [obstructive sleep apnea](#) .

Earlier research had reported craniofacial side effects among children who used nCPAP

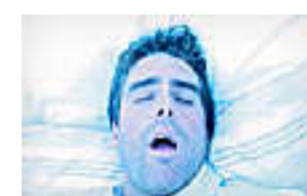
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machines. But the researchers say there had been no documented evidence indicating there was also craniofacial changes in adults.

The researchers took X-rays of the participants' faces after they had used the airway pressure machines for more than two years. Nasal continuous positive airway pressure involves wearing a mask to bed at night that is connected to a machine that helps patients breathe easier. Patients are typically fitted for their masks.

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After evaluating the participants, researchers found that using these airway pressure machines was associated with reduced maxillary and mandibular or front jaw prominence, and altering the two dental arches.

Researchers suspect the air pressure from the machine may contribute to these changes. There were no significant correlations between the participant's age, body mass index, apnea-hypopnea index (measurement of apnea episodes) and the craniofacial changes.

The concern is that repeated use of these machines could change one's facial profile, reduce [tongue](#) space, and potentially worsen [obstructive sleep apnea](#) symptoms over time, particularly if craniofacial changes

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reduce the patient's ability to breathe.

The findings are reported in the October issue of *Chest*, a journal of the American College of Chest Physicians.

The researchers note that these observations raise more questions and require more follow-up.

“The side effects of dental changes obviously have a small impact compared with the beneficial effects of nCPAP, such as reducing the AHI [apnea-hypopnea index] and daytime sleepiness,” the researchers write. “However, because the effects of these dental and skeletal changes have not been fully investigated, further study is required to uncover the factors affecting these changes.”

WebMD Health News | Reviewed by [Laura J. Martin, MD](#) on October 5, 2010

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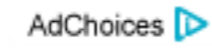
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