

My Favorite Mask: FlexiFit™ 407

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Polio survivor Gladys Swensrud is co-facilitator of the San Diego Polio Survivors support group. She was instrumental in helping to create Kaiser/San Diego's Neuromuscular Respiratory Program, which is presently in the process of seeking expansion throughout Kaiser Permanente in Southern California. With her nasal mask, she uses a RedMed VPAP® III (ST) bilevel machine at settings of IPAP/12, EPAP/5 and a backup rate of 9 Breaths Per Minute (BPM).

Merriam-Webster defines a mask as “a cover or partial cover for the face used for disguise.” That definition instantly conjures up images of the Lone Ranger’s classic black mask. However, for those of us dependent upon bilevel or CPAP support, the function of our masks serve an equally noble purpose – aiding us in safe, restful sleep.

There are almost as many nasal and full face masks available today as there are sizes and shapes of faces. Finding the perfect mask to allow me to sleep in comfort throughout the night required a bit of experimentation. Fortunately, during that critical period I was under the care of the sleep professionals at Progressive Medical in Carlsbad, California. The therapist assigned to help me make this decision was Kelly. She fitted me for three or four different styles and brands. But as soon she hit upon one that matched my requirements, I was finally able to sleep peacefully, both through the night and when resting or sleeping during the day.

Each person’s comfort requirements are slightly different. I needed a mask that had a light touch against my forehead and sinus cavities. I wear glasses throughout the day, so I did not want to go through nights as well as days with pressure against those same facial areas.

After sleeping with the FlexiFit™ 407, manufactured by Fisher & Paykel Healthcare (www.fphcare.com), I concluded that their size small nasal mask worked best for me. There are multiple reasons for my success with this particular model:

- A foam cushion sets into the silicone seal to protect my face from undue pressure. It feels secure, yet comfortable, against my skin.
- The silicone seal pops off (and back on) easily for cleaning, so I am more apt to wash it daily, preventing skin irritation and skin oil buildup.
- A glider strap lets me turn my head while I sleep, but it keeps the mask stationary on my face.
- A well-designed air defuser vents air away from my body, so I am never bothered by air blowing down at my chest.
- Once it has been adjusted to my head size, the headgear generally only needs to be replaced once a year. I set it and basically forget it!
- The headgear disconnects from the mask for easy cleaning. I just put my headgear periodically in the washer on gentle cycle, and let it air dry afterward on top of the dryer.
- The headgear has a stretchy band at the rear for additional comfort at the back of my head.
- The easy slide hooks make it simple to disconnect and/or reconnect my headgear in the dark if I should need to get up in the middle of the night. ▲