MG on the move: Traveling with BiPAP and Trilogy machines

MG patients should always bring breathing machines with them on any trips. Travel is exhausting and it can definitely worsen MG weakness. MG patients should be prepared for this and have their machines ready for use at any time to avoid interrupting the trip with an ER visit.

Small BiPAP machines are small, lightweight and usually have convenient carry bags. However- they do not have battery backup and they require power for use.

Special converter power cords can be purchased from Amazon and BiPAP machine companies so that the machine can be powered by the car cigarette lighter socket. This is an effective way to power the machine during long trips and cords may be ordered online from CPAP suppliers. Using the humidifier will draw additional energy from the battery and should be avoided. **The car should never be started when the BiPAP is plugged into the power socket to avoid electrical damage to the machine and/or vehicle.**

A power inverter is an alternative to converter cord that can be used for a variety of electronic devices using the 12 volt cigarette lighter socket in a car, boat or recreational vehicle. Unfortunately, inverters lose 20-30% of the power as it is being transformed for use by the BiPAP so they are not as effective as converter cords. Using the humidifier will draw additional energy from the battery and should be avoided. The power inverter should be rated approximately twice the amount needed for the machine.

BiPAP battery packs are an option for MG patients who wish to take their BiPAP machines outdoors or on camping trips. Most insurance companies will not cover the cost of a BiPAP battery as it is considered to be a convenience. Some batteries are made by the manufacturer for specific machines while others
may be purchased with adaptors that fit most brands. They are not inexpensive but some patients may find them to be well worth the small investment.

The Trilogy ventilator has both internal and detachable batteries that provide 6 hours of power. The detachable battery can be swapped out for a fully charged one if needed. The batteries charge whenever the ventilator is plugged into an electrical outlet so that they are always ready for use. The trilogy ventilator weighs 11 pounds so it is not lightweight. A carry bag allows it to be attached to wheelchair handles with the screen and control buttons visible. A screen icon indicates the battery status and which battery is currently being used. A screen protector is recommended to protect from scratches or cracks.

Airport - Most TSA security screeners are well familiar with BiPAP machines due to their resemblance to CPAP machines. Patients may be required to remove the machine from the carry case for screening. Most TSA screeners are not familiar with the Trilogy and patients should be prepared to explain its use. TSA screeners may wish to swab the outside of the machine to check for illicit substances, especially if it must stay connected to the patient at all times and cannot go through the x-ray scanner.

**Medical devices are never counted toward passenger carry-on bag limits.** BiPAP and Trilogy machines should never be checked and should always be safely stored in an overhead bin when not in use during the flight. Humidifiers should be emptied to prevent spillage and damage to the machine. A medical equipment luggage tag should be placed on the carry case so that it is readily apparent to all flight attendants and crew.
Patients should always be sure to bring extra supplies including tubing, masks, filters, and any needed connectors. CPAP wipes make it easy to clean the mask regularly and prevent infection. Power cords are easily left behind so patients must make sure they are always packed. It is a good idea to bring sanitizing wipes to clean the outside of the machine, especially if it has been removed from the carry case for inspection or use during travel.

BiPAP machines may be used during flight but approval from the airline is required. Patients should call the airline at least two weeks in advance and get a physician’s letter stating the need for the patient to use the BiPAP during flight. There is no guarantee that the seat will have a power outlet nearby so patients should be sure to have sufficient battery power for the entire flight. Patients traveling overseas should check which power adapter will be needed and purchase one before the trip.

**Patients should have an emergency packet printed and filled out before traveling** in case medical assistance is needed during the trip. The packet should be kept in a brightly colored envelope and someone traveling with the patient should be aware of its location. At least one person traveling with the patient should be knowledgeable about MG to act as an effective advocate in case emergency medical treatment is required.

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/11GYEdW8fUfoMLqX1CdqflE9pikIrB2VDY2WLBxiQY4w/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/11GYEdW8fUfoMLqX1CdqflE9pikIrB2VDY2WLBxiQY4w/edit)

MG patients are always encouraged to purchase travel insurance in case medical care is needed during the trip. Various types of policies are available with a range of prices.

[https://medjetassist.com/membership-options](https://medjetassist.com/membership-options)