

YOUR GUIDE TO HOME OXYGEN THERAPY



PATIENT
INFORMATION
LEAFLET

What is Oxygen Therapy?

The air we breathe contains approximately 21% of oxygen concentration to nourish the body's cells. The body uses oxygen to make energy and produces carbon dioxide as a waste product, which we breathe out.

Some people with lung conditions such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) will find their oxygen levels drop over a period of time, but because this happens slowly, the body will adjust. However, long periods of low oxygen may put a strain on the body's organs.

Why do I need Oxygen at home?

Your doctor has referred you for an assessment because your oxygen levels are below the expected safe range (usually 94% and above). This range may be lower for some patients who suffer from chronic conditions such as COPD (88-92%) or pulmonary fibrosis.

Oxygen therapy can help you to sleep better, feel less irritable, improve your memory, give you more energy, be able to exercise more and feel less short of breath. Having oxygen at home means you may also spend fewer days in hospital.

What are the risks of Oxygen?

Do not use the oxygen near naked flames as oxygen is flammable.

Do not smoke when you are taking oxygen, or allow anyone to smoke around you while you are taking it.

Do not use any moisturisers that contain petroleum jelly or liquid paraffin.

Do not use electronic e-cigarettes as these can increase the risk of fire.

You must turn off the equipment when not in use.

Be aware the oxygen tubing is a trip hazard so take care when moving around.

When you first start using oxygen you may experience nose bleeds which should stop as

your nose becomes used to it; if they persist please contact your GP.

The tubing that holds the mask or nasal prongs in place can sometimes cause your ears to become sore. To prevent or relieve this wrap soft material such as cotton wool around the part of the tubing that sits on your ears.

Having too little or too much oxygen can be harmful so it is important that you don't alter the oxygen flow rate **unless specifically instructed**.

How long will I require Oxygen for?

If you are having oxygen therapy because you have a long-term condition you may need to use the oxygen permanently. If you are having oxygen for a short-term illness you may not need it once you have recovered. You will be given follow-up appointment to check that the amount of oxygen you are receiving is correct.

How will I be assessed?

You will be assessed by the Respiratory Nurse Specialist to determine which type of oxygen delivery system is best suited to your needs.

You will be seen by a Physiotherapist who will carry out a 6 Minute Walk Test whilst measuring your oxygen levels. This will help determine how much oxygen you require when you are mobilising and when you are resting.

If your levels are less than 92% without oxygen you may need to have a blood test from your wrist known as Arterial Blood Gas. This will help determine more accurately the amount of oxygen in your blood and if you retain carbon dioxide.

How do I arrange Oxygen therapy?

If you require oxygen your Respiratory Consultant will complete a prescription form and arrange the order. It usually takes 48-72 hours for the equipment to be delivered. It is important you nominate a family member who can be home on the day of equipment delivery.

Do I need to pay for my Home O2 equipment?

If you have a valid medical card you do not need to pay for the oxygen therapy. If you don't have a medical card, you can get reimbursement under the Drug Payment Scheme.

Going on holiday?

If you are going on holiday in this country, you can order a supply of oxygen equipment to be delivered at the destination. You will need beforehand to confirm with the place they are happy to have the equipment for health and safety reasons. Most oxygen suppliers will only be able to accommodate longer stays such as 1 week holiday due to logistical complexity. Please contact the oxygen supplier directly who will be able to advise how this can be organised.

If you want to travel abroad make sure you plan well ahead. For further guidance please contact your Oxygen supplier who will be able to provide more information.

What about my Electricity?

You will be able to avail the Priority Service for patients whose electricity supply is critical. The ESB will not request disconnection of electricity other than if asked to do so by you or for fault / safety / maintenance reasons.

You will need to register for this scheme by calling your electricity provider who will be able to provide further guidance.

What if I need to cancel or re-schedule my appointment?

Please call your Respiratory Nurse Specialist or your oxygen prescriber