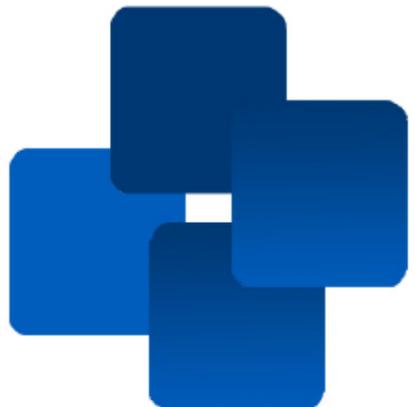
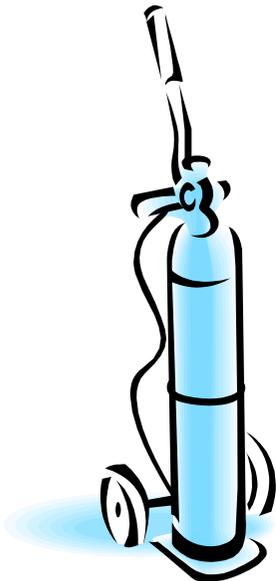


Patient Information

Long Term Oxygen Therapy

Respiratory Department



What is oxygen?

Oxygen is a gas that occurs naturally in the air we all breathe.

Why do we need oxygen?

Oxygen is needed by all of the cells and organs in our bodies so that they can work efficiently. The more activity we do, the more oxygen we need. The body does not store oxygen.

Why is oxygen prescribed?

Oxygen is prescribed to you:

- as your blood oxygen levels are too low (**hypoxia**). This may be due to an illness, chest condition or post-operation.
- to reduce the likelihood of your symptoms getting worse.
- to protect your other organs, especially your heart.

Oxygen is not given for symptoms of breathlessness unless you are also hypoxic.

How much oxygen do I need?

A GP, doctor or specialist nurse will assess your oxygen needs and complete a home oxygen order form for you. It's similar to a prescription, and gets sent to the company delivering your oxygen and equipment.

You'll be asked to fill in a consent form, plus a form that asks a number of safety-related questions. The forms are needed to make sure oxygen is installed in your home in the safest way possible.

How is oxygen supplied?

A company called BOC supplies your oxygen. Your oxygen is most likely to be via an **oxygen concentrator** (a machine that filters oxygen from the room air) whilst at home, with additional **cylinders** to use when outdoors.

A concentrator works off electricity and will not run out unless there is a power cut - a back up cylinder is supplied for this emergency. Cylinders contain oxygen as a gas and will run out. How long each cylinder lasts depends on their size and the litres of oxygen you require.

Important - You will need to contact BOC three days before your supply runs out to arrange for replacement cylinders to be delivered.

How do I use my oxygen?

You can take oxygen in a number of ways by using a:

- tube positioned under your nose with small prongs that fit just inside your nostrils (nasal cannula).
- face mask placed over your nose and mouth.

What is 'Long Term Oxygen Therapy' (LTOT)?

LTOT means you wear your oxygen for 16 hours or more (including overnight) per every 24 hours, with small breaks off oxygen in between.

You will benefit more if you are wearing your oxygen when you are active, such as when dressing or climbing stairs. This is because the more active you are, the more oxygen you need. The body does not store oxygen for use later.

How long will I need oxygen for?

You will be re-assessed in eight weeks' time (earlier if necessary) either at an oxygen clinic or at home. The doctor or nurse will ask you some questions and will carry out a blood test.

A small blood sample is taken from your earlobe or finger, by using a lancet - mild discomfort may be experienced and occasionally a small bruise may develop. This blood is used to assess your oxygen and carbon dioxide levels.

Sometimes a sensor could be attached to your finger to measure your blood levels (a pulse oximetry test).

Depending on your blood levels, your additional oxygen supply:

- may be removed
- may remain unchanged, or
- may be increased.

The oxygen equipment you have been using will also be reviewed.

Care - If you suffer from regular headaches, increased drowsiness or confusion, please seek medical advice as these could be a symptom to indicate increased carbon dioxide levels.

Safety advice

Oxygen is a fire hazard, so you need to take precautions if you're using oxygen at home:

- Follow BOC's instructions regarding the care of your oxygen equipment.
- Inform your home/car insurance to check you are covered by your policy.
- Install fire alarms and smoke detectors in your home and make sure they're working.
- Inform your local fire brigade that you have oxygen at home.
- Keep oxygen cylinders upright to prevent them being damaged.
- Keep a fire extinguisher within easy reach at home.
- Turn off your oxygen/concentrator when not in use as a build up of gas can occur.
- Inform your electric supplier if you use a concentrator - you will have a priority reconnection and may be entitled to a rebate.
- Only use your oxygen as prescribed - if your needs change you will need to be reviewed. For some patients too little or too much oxygen can be dangerous.
- **Do not** smoke or let anyone else smoke while you're using oxygen.
- **Do not** wear oxygen near naked flames or heat sources, such as gas cookers and gas heaters.
- **Do not** use flammable liquids, such as cleaning fluid, paint thinner or aerosols, while using oxygen.
- **Do not** use petroleum based creams/lipsticks, such as Vaseline, when using oxygen.

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