

# Long-Term Oxygen Therapy (LTOT)

## What is oxygen?

Oxygen is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas that occurs naturally in the air we all breathe.

## Why is oxygen prescribed?

Oxygen is prescribed to you for the following reasons:

- Your blood oxygen level is too low (hypoxia), which may be due to an illness, chest condition, or after surgery.
- To protect your other organs, especially your heart.

**Oxygen is not prescribed solely for breathlessness unless you also have low oxygen levels.**

## How much oxygen would I need?

A GP, doctor, or healthcare clinician will check the oxygen levels in your blood. This may involve attaching an oxygen sensor to your finger or earlobe (a pulse oximetry test) and performing an arterial blood gas or capillary blood gas to determine the amount of oxygen you require.

## How is oxygen supplied?

**Baywater Healthcare is the company that supplies your oxygen.**

- At home you will most likely use an **oxygen concentrator**, with extra cylinders for when you are outdoors. The concentrator runs on electricity and will not run out unless there is a power cut, in which case a backup cylinder is provided.
- **Cylinders** hold oxygen as a gas and will eventually run out. How long each cylinder lasts depends on its size and how much oxygen you need.

**It is important to contact Baywater Healthcare 2-3 days before your supply runs out to arrange for replacement cylinders.**

## How can I administer my oxygen?

You can take oxygen in different ways, including:

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

## What is long-term oxygen therapy (LTOT)?

LTOT means you use your oxygen for 16 hours or more each day, including overnight, with short breaks in between.

You will get more benefit from wearing your oxygen whilst you are active, like when dressing or climbing stairs, because the more active you are, the more oxygen your body needs. **Keep in mind, the body does not store oxygen for later use.**

## How long will I need oxygen for?

You will be re-assessed in eight weeks (or sooner if needed) either at an oxygen clinic or home visit by the community respiratory nurse. During this check-up, the doctor or nurse will ask you some questions and perform a blood test.

A small sample of blood will be taken from your earlobe or finger using a lancet, which may cause mild discomfort and occasionally a small bruise. This blood sample helps assess your oxygen and carbon dioxide levels. Sometimes, a sensor may be attached to your finger to measure your blood oxygen levels (a pulse oximetry test). Based on your blood levels, your oxygen supply:

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

The oxygen equipment you are using will also be reviewed.

**Important** - If you experience regular headaches, increased drowsiness, or confusion, seek medical advice, as these could be signs of higher carbon dioxide levels.

## Safety advice

**Oxygen is a fire risk, but it is safe when handled properly. Therefore, it is important to follow specific precautions when using oxygen at home:**

- Follow Baywater Healthcare's instructions and advice regarding the care of your oxygen equipment. If you are unsure of anything, please contact them on **0800 373 580**.
- **Do not smoke or use e-cigarettes/vape** or let anyone else smoke when using your oxygen.
- **Install a smoke alarm.** Regularly check your smoke alarm to ensure it is working and batteries do not need replacing.
- Keep a fire extinguisher within easy reach at home.
- **Keep away from naked flammors or heat sources** including heaters, hot conservatories and hot vehicles. Recommended distance for oxygen therapy equipment from fires 3m (10 ft); radiators and heaters 1.5m (5ft).
- **Do not use** flammable liquids, such as cleaning fluid, paint thinner or aerosols, while using oxygen.
- **Avoid using lotions, creams, lip balms and skin products that contain paraffin or oil.** These can react when used with oxygen therapy. Speak to your GP or pharmacist for guidance on the safest product to use.
- Store oxygen cylinders in a cool place with good flow around it and an upright position to avoid damage.
- A firebreak will stop a fire from spreading in your tubing. **Never remove** this small, white, plastic piece from the tubing.
- Turn off your oxygen/concentrator when not in use as a build-up of gas can occur.
- Inform your home/car insurance to check you are covered by your policy.

- Inform your local fire brigade that you have oxygen at home.
- Notify your electricity provider if you're using a concentrator – this may grant you priority reconnection and possibly a rebate.
- **Use your oxygen only as prescribed.** If your needs change, a review will be necessary. For some patients, too little or too much oxygen can be dangerous.

## Further information

- **Baywater Healthcare** [www.baywater.co.uk/services/home-oxygen-therapy/oxygen-safety/](http://www.baywater.co.uk/services/home-oxygen-therapy/oxygen-safety/)
- **Fire and Rescue Service** [www.fireservice.co.uk](http://www.fireservice.co.uk)

## Useful contact details

### East and North Hertfordshire Teaching NHS Trust:

- Website [www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk)
- Telephone 01438 314333

### Baywater Healthcare:

- Website [www.baywater.co.uk](http://www.baywater.co.uk)
- Telephone Helpline 0800 373 580

### Respiratory CNS, Lister:

- Helpline 01438 285995

### Respiratory Secretary:

- Telephone 01438 285621

## Leaflet information

**You can request this information in a different format or another language; please speak to your doctor or nurse.**

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