

# Home Oxygen Therapy

## Oxygen Team

### Patient Information Leaflet

#### Introduction

This leaflet is for people who have been referred to the oxygen team. It gives information on oxygen therapy, how you use the oxygen, the precautions you need to take and what to do if you have any problems.

#### What is oxygen therapy?

The air we breathe contains approximately 21 per cent of oxygen to nourish the body's cells and we breathe out a waste gas of carbon dioxide. Some people with a lung condition 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.

It has been found that giving supplementary oxygen can be beneficial to some people.

Oxygen is not appropriate for everyone as with some lung conditions, people lose their ability to remove carbon dioxide effectively.

You may have been referred to the oxygen team for an assessment. This can involve a blood test being taken from an artery (blood vessel) in your wrist.

This sample will be used to analyse the amount of both oxygen and carbon dioxide in your blood. This test has to be carried out when you are reasonably well, not currently on any antibiotics or just getting over a chest infection.

There are several different kinds of oxygen therapy:

**Long term oxygen therapy (LTOT)** – for more than 15 hours a day.

**Ambulatory oxygen therapy (AOT)** – used only when you are active.

**Palliative oxygen therapy (POT)** – for breathlessness that doesn't respond to other treatments.

## What happens if I am using oxygen at home?

You may have left hospital with oxygen to use at home while you fully recover. If this is the case, the oxygen team will visit you at home to carry out an assessment about four to eight weeks after you leave hospital. This is to allow time for your infection or condition to settle.

If you have not been contacted within this time, please contact the team on the helpline number:

01384 323193 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

The healthcare professional who ordered the home oxygen for you will advise on the flow rate and number of hours you should use the oxygen for. Please **do not** change this without speaking to the oxygen team.

If you feel that your medical condition is getting worse, or you start to feel unwell, contact your GP.

## How do I use the oxygen?

You breathe the oxygen in through a face mask or through thin tubes (prongs) in your nose. This is known medically as a nasal cannula.

An oxygen concentrator is a machine that delivers oxygen concentrated from the air in the room. It works off your electricity supply at home, which the company will reimburse you the cost of. The oxygen company will advise you on where the machine should be kept and how to look after it, and they will leave you an information booklet.

The oxygen supply company will leave you a backup cylinder in case of a power failure. We may also prescribe a portable cylinder for you if we think you would benefit from oxygen when you go out. The oxygen supply company will advise you on how to use it safely.

# What precautions do I need to take?

**Be aware** that the oxygen tubing is a trip hazard, so take care when you are moving around.

To avoid fire risks

- **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.

## Equipment

The oxygen supply company will contact you regarding servicing the equipment.

However, you need to do a few things on a regular basis:

- Change the nasal cannula monthly, after a chest infection or when visibly dirty. Do not wash them.
- If the oxygen concentrator has a filter, clean it weekly. The technician will show you how.
- Make sure the firebreaks (small white connectors) are on the oxygen pipe at all times.

## Pressure sores

The oxygen tubing may cause sores, particularly on the tops of your ears.

If your ears, nose or face become sore, the oxygen company can supply you with ear protectors and your oxygen team can advise on other ways to apply your tubing. In addition, you can tape a piece of gauze around the tubing to protect your skin. Only use water-based products due to the risk of fire and chemical burns as some creams react with oxygen.

# Your oxygen prescription

Having too much or too little oxygen can be harmful, so it is important that you only use the oxygen as it has been prescribed for you. Having too much oxygen can lead to your carbon dioxide levels increasing, which can cause

- drowsiness or lethargy;
- headaches, particularly in the morning;
- dizziness;
- confusion and
- an increased risk of death.

## Oxygen sensitive

Certain medical conditions can cause low oxygen levels and high carbon dioxide levels, which is naturally in our body, but too much can be harmful.

If you are at risk of retaining carbon dioxide which can be made worse with oxygen, your oxygen nurse will give you an “Alert Card”.

If you have to ring an ambulance or attend hospital, take this card with you and show it to the ambulance crew or hospital staff. They will treat you with the oxygen you need, but they will be prewarned that you are sensitive to oxygen and they will monitor you appropriately.

## **What should I do if I have problems?**

You can contact:

### **Baywater Healthcare Limited**

This is the company who supplies your oxygen. They can be contacted on 0800 373580, seven days a week.

### **West Midlands Fire Service Home Safety Centre**

If you have any fire safety issues, you can contact them on 0800 389 5525.

**The Dudley Group Oxygen Team** on 01384 323193, 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Please leave a message on the answer machine if you are calling out of these hours.

# Can I find out more?

You can find out more from the following:

## **Baywater Healthcare Limited**

Please read the leaflet 'A guide to home oxygen' which the company will supply with the oxygen equipment, as it contains important information.

You can also visit the weblink:

<https://www.baywater.co.uk/patient-carer/our-therapies/oxygen>

## **British Lung Foundation**

03000 030 555

<https://www.blf.org.uk/>

## **British Heart Foundation**

0300 330 3311

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/>

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

The Dudley Group Oxygen Team on 01384 323193 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

**This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:**

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/respiratory-medicine/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email [dgft.patient.information@nhs.net](mailto:dgft.patient.information@nhs.net)

