



PATIENT INFORMATION

GOING HOME FROM HOSPITAL WITH OXYGEN

An information guide



What is oxygen therapy?

Oxygen therapy means using an oxygen cylinder or a machine called a concentrator to breathe in air that contains more oxygen than normal air.

How does oxygen work?

Oxygen increases the amount of oxygen in the lungs and the bloodstream. A person with heart or lung disease may need oxygen therapy if they have low oxygen levels in their blood.

Oxygen is not a treatment for breathlessness.

Oxygen therapy may be given by different methods, including:

- Through a tube placed under a person's nose (nasal cannula)
- Through a face mask placed over a person's mouth and nose (oxygen face mask)

What are the benefits of oxygen at home?

Oxygen therapy corrects the low oxygen levels in your bloodstream, thereby helping to reduce any strain on your heart and lungs.

Sometimes you may not feel a direct improvement from using the oxygen, however it can improve quality of sleep, your memory, your energy levels, your mood, your alertness, your appetite and improved oxygen delivery to vital organs.

Home oxygen can be prescribed in several different forms, and the health professional that assesses and discusses your lifestyle with you will decide what is best for you.

Using oxygen therapy at home

You may only need oxygen at home for a short period. **Being prescribed oxygen either after a hospital stay or after an assessment by a health professional *does not mean* that you will always need oxygen.**

Your health care professional will use blood tests to look at the amount of oxygen you have in your blood. This tells us if you need more or less oxygen, or it can be stopped and removed from your home.

If you need oxygen at home, it is important to learn how to use it and take care of your equipment.

Here are some commonly asked questions:

Will I become dependent on oxygen?

NO. You have been prescribed oxygen as you have low blood oxygen levels. You will be advised on how many hours per day you need to use it. If you want to go out or have a short time away from home, it will normally be alright to come off the oxygen for a while. Sometimes you may be prescribed oxygen to use outside of the home. You will not become dependent on oxygen, and it will never lose its useful effects.

Who provides the oxygen?

Baywater is the oxygen provider for the West Midlands. They will supply all of the oxygen equipment that you require. This may be in the form of cylinders or a concentrator as well as the tubing, nasal prongs or masks that are needed. The equipment you require will be discussed before discharge with the respiratory nurses. You will need to contact Baywater if you require any equipment replacing or the cylinders refilling.

Is it safe to use oxygen at home?

YES providing you use it safely. Oxygen is a fire hazard. Follow these measures to keep you and your family/carers safe.

Never smoke or let anyone else smoke while you are using oxygen. Put up no smoking signs. **We may have to remove oxygen if there are concerns that smoking in the home is not being managed safely.** Be aware of people smoking near you if you are using your oxygen outside of your home.

Do keep oxygen at least six feet (two metres) away from flames or heat sources such as gas cookers, paraffin or gas heaters, candles, cigarettes, cigars and fireplaces.

Do not use flammable products, such as cleaning fluid, paint thinner, aerosols or petroleum based creams while you are using oxygen.

Do ensure that you have smoke/fire alarms within your home that are in working order (the local fire service can advise you and supply you with them).

Consider keeping a fire extinguisher at home within easy reach.

Baywater will inform your local fire station that you have oxygen at home. They will also advise on keeping safe and will carry out a risk assessment on your home.

Keep oxygen cylinders upright or lie them down. Make sure they do not fall over and get damaged, especially when travelling in a vehicle. Ensure that portable (ambulatory) oxygen is secured in your vehicle to stop it rolling around.

Ensure oxygen is turned off when not in use.

Can I have too much oxygen?

Yes. It is important to attend any oxygen review appointments or speak to your GP/Nurse if your oxygen needs have not been assessed in the last 12 months.

Oxygen is a prescribed drug that all patients must be carefully assessed for.

Oxygen can cause harm if used in the wrong way.

People who use oxygen when they do not need it may harmful effects such as an increase of carbon dioxide levels in the bloodstream. High carbon dioxide levels can make people very ill and can even be life threatening.

If you are worried that you or someone you know has been given oxygen without a proper assessment, please contact your GP or member of the oxygen team. If you were given oxygen to take home when you were poorly in hospital, you need to be assessed again. You may be taking oxygen unnecessarily and risking harmful side effects.

Can I travel if I have oxygen?

YES. Plan to make sure your trip goes well:

Talk to your oxygen nurse for advice on whether you're safe to travel and what you need to do. Contact Baywater (see telephone number on back of this leaflet) who will assist in providing oxygen at your destination if it is required. If travelling abroad, have an early discussion with your local oxygen nurse team. Travelling with oxygen can be done if you plan ahead. Before the trip, tell the travel company that you use oxygen. Do this well in advance as they may have requirements that can take some time to arrange.

Basic instructions

Do not light candles, lanterns, fires and cookers or smoke while you are wearing your oxygen. There is a serious risk of fire or burns.

Do not change the setting on your oxygen without talking to your doctor/nurse or member of the Oxygen Team first. Turning the flow rate up or down could put you in danger.

Do keep track of how much oxygen is in the cylinder/tank (in case you are not on an oxygen concentrator – a machine that plugs into an electric socket), and order in advance so you don't run out.

Do not drink alcohol to excess or take drugs that relax you, such as sleeping pills, sedatives or recreational drugs, while using oxygen (unless prescribed by your health care professional). They can cause you to breathe too slowly.

Do call your GP if you feel: - increasingly short of breath – restless or confused – have early morning headaches – very tired.

If you use nasal cannulae (prongs):

Wash the nasal prongs with soap and water once or twice a week. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on caring for your equipment. **Replace** the prongs every two to four weeks. If you have a cold or the flu, change them when your symptoms pass. Your home oxygen supplier can provide these for you.

Use a water-based moisturiser (such as KY Jelly or similar) on your lips and in your nose to prevent drying and cracking. Read labels, and look for a product that lists water as the first ingredient.

Do not use petroleum-based products (such as Vaseline petroleum jelly) as these can plug air holes and are also a fire hazard and can potentially cause chemical burns.

Put a piece of gauze under the tubing to keep the skin behind your ears from getting sore or get advice from a health care professional. EZ wraps (foam padding) for the tubing that sits around your ears is available through Baywater.

My Oxygen prescription: Valid from:

The oxygen flow rate should be set at litres a minute when sitting still

The oxygen flow rate should be set at litres a minutes when moving around.

You should use your oxygen for at least hours each day including when you are asleep at night.

You MUST NOT increase the flow rate unless advised to by your clinician.

Important numbers

Worcestershire Home Oxygen Service (Mon- Fri, 9am-5pm): 01905 681062

COPD Team (Mon- Fri, 9am-5pm): 01905 760023

Worcester Royal Respiratory Nurses (Mon- Fri, 9am-5pm): 01905 760255

Alexandra Hospital Respiratory Nurses (Mon- Fri, 9am-5pm): 01527 503887

British Lung Foundation: For more information about your lung condition and oxygen treatment

08458 50 50 20 w: <http://www.lunguk.org/>

For replacement of equipment or holiday deliveries, please contact Baywater who are the specified contractor to supply your prescribed oxygen requirements.

Telephone number: 0800 373 580

If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PET@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Thursday from 8.30am to 4.30pm and Friday: 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that a voicemail service is in use at busy times, but messages will be returned as quickly as possible.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.