

PATIENT/CARE GIVER INFORMATION

Oxygen Therapy

What is oxygen therapy?

Oxygen is a tasteless, odorless gas that makes up approximately 20 percent of the air you breathe.

When you breathe, your body takes in oxygen and releases carbon dioxide.

Sometimes when people have breathing problems, the oxygen level in the blood decreases and extra oxygen is needed. Sometimes the blood oxygen levels are normal but the lungs have difficulty removing the carbon dioxide.

Oxygen therapy can help people who have certain diseases that cause low levels of oxygen in their blood.

Oxygen therapy will reduce stress on your heart and lungs and improve your quality of life.

Who is eligible for home oxygen therapy?

1. You must be a BC resident for more than 3 months.
2. You must be eligible for and have a valid BC personal health number (PHN).
3. You must have an oxygen level less than 88% for 6 minutes when resting *OR*
4. You must have an oxygen level less than 88% for at least 1 minute of a 6 minute walk.
5. You must be capable of handling oxygen at home.

**SMOKING IS NOT ALLOWED IN THE HOME and YOU MUST NOT SMOKE
WHEN ON OXYGEN THERAPY**

Subsidy Program

You must meet specific eligibility criteria for the Home Oxygen Program in order to receive the subsidy. Your nurse, doctor or respiratory therapist can help you to understand these criteria. Initially the Home Oxygen Program (HOP) will provide you with a minimum 30-day subsidy for an oxygen system.

HOP will subsidize the following 3 systems:

- 1) Concentrator,
- 2) Portable, or
- 3) A combination of concentrator and portable.

HOP staff will help you choose the one that is right for you.

Billing Procedures

If you have Extended Health Benefits, the Home Oxygen Program will bill them first and then will pay the cost that is not covered by the Extended Benefits Plan. For example: If Pacific Blue Cross pays 80%, then the Home Oxygen Program will pay the other 20%.

If you do not have third party coverage, then the Home Oxygen Plan will pay the full amount.

BC Palliative Benefits Drug Program DOES NOT pay for home oxygen

What can I do if I am *not* eligible for the Home Oxygen Program?

If you do not qualify for the Home Oxygen Program, you can buy or rent home oxygen therapy equipment through a private company if you have a prescription from your doctor.

Oxygen Delivery Devices

The most common method of oxygen delivery is by 'nasal prongs', two plastic tubes, about ½" long. One prong is inserted into each nostril of your nose and connects to a tube that supplies the oxygen.

With nasal prongs you breathe through your nose and can talk normally. The tubing can rest on your ears or be attached to the frame of eye glasses.

People who need a high flow of oxygen generally use a mask. Simple masks must be run at 6 L/m or greater.

Some people who use nasal prongs during the day may prefer a mask at night. If you have a cold you may prefer to use a mask.

Because the oxygen is not humidified some people may experience a dry nose. A bubble humidifier can be added to the tank or concentrator to supply moisture.

Oxygen Concentrator

This is an electrically powered device that separates the oxygen out of the air, concentrates it, and stores it. The advantages of this system are:

- It does not have to be refilled and it is not as costly as liquid oxygen.
- Extra tubing permits the user to move around with minimal difficulty.

Some people need oxygen only at night while others need it 24 hours a day. If you are unable to leave your home an oxygen concentrator is generally easier to use and less expensive.

You must have a cylinder of oxygen as backup in the event of a power failure. You should also advise your electric company in order to get priority service during a power failure.

Compressed Gas

Oxygen is stored under pressure in a cylinder equipped with a regulator which controls the rate of flow in L/min. Because the flow of oxygen from the cylinder is constant, an oxygen conserving device may also be attached to the system so that oxygen is only released from the tank when you inhale and stops when you exhale to avoid wasting the oxygen.

Oxygen can be provided in a small cylinder that can be carried with you while outside the home.

For use inside the home, a heavier, large stationary tank is more suitable

Additional Equipment Supplied by the Oxygen Company

Regulator – reduces the pressure of the oxygen that is released from the tank during administration, and tells you how much oxygen remains.

Flow meter – regulates how much oxygen is administered to you in litres per minute. This dose prescription will be given to you by your doctor.

Humidifier – replaces the water vapor that is lost during the oxygen manufacturing process. The oxygen in tanks contains zero percent relative humidity.

Nasal Prongs – deliver low concentrations of oxygen for extended periods, through 2 small extensions that fit into each nostril.

Will someone come to my home?

A respiratory therapist from the oxygen company will come to your home.

The therapist will answer your questions and teach you how to operate the oxygen system safely. The therapist will help you adjust to your new lifestyle and will keep in contact with you to discuss your ongoing oxygen needs.

What safety precautions do I need to know about?

The oxygen company will provide a home assessment including information about use of oxygen, oxygen safety and delivery schedules.

Do's and Don'ts?

- Do not change the flow of oxygen unless directed by your doctor.
- Give enough time for your oxygen supplier to deliver the oxygen refill.
- Do not use an oil-based product like petroleum jelly or Vaseline. Use water-based lubricants on your lips or nostrils. For more information, please contact your doctor, nurse, or oxygen supplier.
 - Protect the area behind your ears by putting a small piece of gauze beneath the tubing. If you have persistent redness under your nose, call your doctor.
 - Wash your nasal prongs with liquid anti-bacterial soap once to twice weekly. Rinse thoroughly and leave to air dry. Replace them every 2-4 weeks.

**For further advice: call your GP, 7 West (Lions Gate Hospital) 604 984 5738
or in an Emergency call 911**