Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Home Oxygen Safety

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Home Oxygen Safety

Patient Information

Respiratory Service

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Home Oxygen Safety

Patient Name: .....

NHS No. .....

Why do I need Home Oxygen?

Oxygen is usually prescribed if you have been found to have low levels of oxygen in your blood. If your blood oxygen levels remain very low, over time it can cause your blood to thicken. This can put strain on your heart as it pushes the thickened blood around your body and can increase the risk of blood clot-related problems, such as a Stroke or Heart Attack.

Using oxygen for 16 hours a day or more can prevent this thickening and reduce the risk of a blood clot.

You may still be prescribed portable oxygen if your blood levels only drop when you are exerting yourself (and oxygen is found to improve your activity levels). This will only be prescribed by an oxygen specialist after an exercise test when your condition is stable.

It is important to remember that oxygen is not an effective way to help with breathlessness and the reason for using it is to prevent problems with your blood, not your breathing.

Oxygen is a prescribed medication and is only given if it is clinically needed AND that it is used safely. Oxygen may well be stopped (and removed) if your condition improves or there are any safety concerns identified.

Please inform the supplier of your home insurance that you now have oxygen in your home; this should not cost you more money.

Please read the important safety information inside this leaflet alongside the oxygen suppliers' handbook that you will get on delivery of your oxygen.

DO'S

- Use your oxygen as you have been advised to following your assessment. Do not alter your flow rate. Do not allow children or anyone unfamiliar with the equipment to tamper with it.

Why? Patients can feel worse if they have **MORE** than the prescribed rate. More is not necessarily better. If you feel drowsy, muddled or if you are experiencing a lot of headaches, please contact us. Tampering with the equipment can cause damage.

- You must switch your oxygen off when you are not using it, even for short

periods of time.

Why? Surrounding materials, including your clothing, will become 'soaked' in oxygen if left running on furniture and will ignite if in contact with a heat source or spark.

- Ensure your cylinder is kept upright and is not banged or knocked over.

Why? If your cylinder falls over, either the cylinder or the valve and flow regulator (at the top of the cylinder) may be damaged, causing problems with your flow rate and the potential for leak, possibly leading to a fire.

- Do use your oxygen in a well-ventilated room.

Why? There is less risk of the air becoming too oxygen rich and therefore less risk of a fire.

- Do keep the oxygen mask clean, by wiping with a damp cloth
- Do attend all of your oxygen assessment appointments.

Why? Oxygen will only be prescribed as long as it is safe to do so. Without a regular review and updated oxygen assessment, it may not be safe to continue the oxygen prescription and will therefore be removed.

DON'TS

- Do not smoke or allow anyone else to smoke in the same room as the oxygen. This includes the use of 'Electronic' Cigarettes

- Do not light candles or oil burners whilst using your oxygen

- Do not cook whilst using your oxygen, or sit near heat source in the kitchen (this includes microwave ovens)

- Do not store your oxygen in a warm place and do not sit close to the fire when using your oxygen (or run tubing close to your fire).

Why? Naked flames & other heat sources **WILL** cause oxygen to ignite. You risk severe burns or an explosion if you smoke whilst using oxygen. Always turn oxygen off when cooking.

- Do not let others use your oxygen.

Why? Oxygen is a prescribed drug to be used only by the person it has been prescribed for. Also, to do so increases risk of infection.

- Do not allow the plastic oxygen tubing or the cylinder to come into contact with any source of heat. If you have long oxygen tubing, please make sure it doesn't get tangled; check your tubing for signs of damage. Keep the tubing tidy.

Why? The tubing may melt, causing the oxygen to leak out, you will not get the correct amount and the risk of fire will be increased. Keeping the tubing tidy prevents trips and slips.

- Do not use any oil or paraffin-based creams/ointments (such as Vaseline or E45 cream) on your nose, face or hands.

Why? Oxygen can react with these creams/ointments to cause skin irritation. Also, they are flammable and will increase your risk of harm in the event of a fire. Consult your pharmacist for further advice.

Symptoms of Too Much Oxygen

It is very difficult to know whether you are getting enough oxygen as it is not necessarily related to breathlessness. The correct flow rate of oxygen will be decided by the Home Oxygen Assessment Team or Doctor.

It is possible to get too much oxygen either if you have altered your flow rate or if you have (or starting with) a chest infection. If you suffer any of the following (when on oxygen) please contact the Home Oxygen Service or your GP straight away:

- Feeling drowsy, sleepy, or muddled
- Develop a headache (especially in the mornings)
- Confusion or hallucinations.

What Happens Next?

You will have been asked to sign a special consent form that allows the person prescribing your oxygen to share you details with the Fire Service and the Oxygen Supplier. You will also be asked to sign a Safety Declaration Form to confirm that you understand the issues of fire safety when using oxygen.

The oxygen Supplier for the North-West is a company called Baywater. They will contact you to ask a few questions about your oxygen and arrange the delivery and installation. They will teach you and/or your carers how to use the oxygen equipment and make sure it is all set up and ready to use.

You will also receive a visit from the Community Fire Service to offer you a Home Safety Check in addition to follow up care from the team that has prescribed your oxygen.

If you have any problems with your oxygen equipment, then contact Baywater on their helpline number 0800 373 580 (24 hrs a day). Alternatively, if you need to speak to your clinical team use the following number (or your out of hours GP if they are closed).

Contact Details

To contact a community respiratory nurse call Boston House Respiratory Team on:

0300 707 1170 from 9am until 5pm Mon-Fri and/or leave a message.

Or email wwl-tr.commrespiratory@nhs.net

This will be monitored by admin staff who will ask someone to call you back.

COPD unit in the hospital: Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm telephone: 01942 822231

Although we try to contact you within 24 working hours, please be aware this may not be on the same day, and we do not currently have a weekend service.

Local Pharmacy

Your local pharmacies offer a wide range of services including information and general advice on symptom relief medicines as well as a prescription collective and delivery service.



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