

Trust-wide

Emergency oxygen therapy use in Adult patients

Your body needs oxygen to work properly. Usually, you breathe in oxygen from the air around you. This goes into your lungs and then into your blood. Your blood then carries the oxygen to all the cells in your body.

Why you'll benefit from oxygen therapy

Some medical conditions make it harder for your body to get oxygen into your lungs. To get enough oxygen, your body works harder. This can make you feel breathless.

Oxygen therapy is a way to give you extra oxygen through a mask or into your nostrils. When you breathe in, you will receive more oxygen. This extra oxygen will help to bring the low level of oxygen in your blood up to normal.

You don't need to breathe differently on oxygen therapy

You can breathe normally.



Patient Information

How we prescribe oxygen

Usually, we measure the oxygen level in your blood using a probe we place on your finger. The probe rests on your finger and doesn't hurt.

We prescribe your dose of oxygen and the way we give you oxygen based on the results from the probe. The main ways we give you oxygen are:

- through a face mask
- through small tubes placed into your nostrils.

You may need have a blood test from the wrist. This is called an 'Arterial Blood Gas' analysis.

How often will I need oxygen tests with the finger probe?

Some people need continuous monitoring. Others are monitored a few times a day. How often you'll have oxygen tests will depend on your personal condition.

How long you stay on oxygen therapy

How long we prescribe you oxygen for depends on your own condition. Usually, oxygen is only prescribed for a short time.

We'll assess your blood oxygen level often. As your blood oxygen level improves, we may reduce and stop oxygen therapy.

Do not adjust your oxygen

Medical oxygen is a drug. It must be prescribed by a doctor or other qualified professionals.

Medical oxygen is almost 100% pure. Your oxygen mask or nasal prongs dilutes the oxygen with room air to give you the dose of oxygen you need.

Patient Information

If you feel breathless:

- Tell the nurses, physiotherapists, or doctors. They'll measure your blood oxygen levels and administer more oxygen if you need it.

Other ways to treat breathlessness

There are many ways to treat breathlessness caused by a medical condition. Your oxygen may be reduced or stopped while you still experience occasional breathlessness.

If you are experiencing breathlessness, always tell the nurses or doctors who will reassure you and explain what is happening. They will give you more oxygen or other treatments for your breathlessness if needed.

Risks of oxygen therapy

Generally, having extra oxygen is not harmful. There is no medical benefit from receiving extra oxygen.

There are certain cases where receiving abnormally high level of oxygen can be harmful.

Respiratory failure

People who have an excess retention of carbon dioxide in their lungs are at risk of developing Respiratory Failure (Type 2) unless oxygen is cautiously administered and titrated to a recommended rate, based on the patients' respiratory conditions.

High carbon dioxide in the lung is related to long term conditions such as:

- chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- type 2 respiratory failure
- obesity hypoventilation syndrome
- weakness of the lung muscles
- sleep apnoea
- sleep disorders affecting the level of carbon dioxide in your lungs

Patient Information

Can too much oxygen be harmful?

Yes, but it is rare. Some patients with long term lung conditions may have raised levels of carbon dioxide in the blood. These patients may become very sensitive to oxygen, so it is important that oxygen is provided accurately through specialised masks. Your medical team will inform you if this is relevant to you.

Using oxygen safely

Oxygen enhances combustion. This means that anything in the presence of oxygen will burn faster, especially clothes, bedding, and ointments containing petroleum products.

We strictly operate a no-smoking policy in the hospital.

If your oxygen mask falls off

if your oxygen mask temporarily falls off, the nurses looking after your care will ensure that it is replaced as soon as possible.

You may replace it back over your nose and mouth as you have been advised.

Taking off the oxygen mask

Some patients can remove the oxygen for periods of time, such as at mealtimes. Your doctor or nurse will tell you if you can take off your oxygen mask.

Oxygen therapy at home

Most people do not need to go home on oxygen.

If you need oxygen at home, your healthcare team will discuss this with you.

Patient Information

More information

If you have any questions about your oxygen therapy, ask the nurse, doctor or physiotherapist that's looking after you.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact the ward and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke-free policy.

Did we get it right?

We would like you to tell us what you think about our services. This helps us make further improvements and recognise members of staff who provide a good service.

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