

Respiratory Physiology

Long Term Oxygen Therapy

What is Long Term Oxygen Therapy?

Long Term Oxygen Therapy (LTOT) describes supplementary oxygen which is used at home. It can help:

- Increase life expectancy;
- Improve quality of life;
- Improve sleep quality.

Studies show that when supplementary oxygen is used for at least 15 hours a day, (including during the night when you are sleeping), it can improve survival and symptoms and improve quality of life. Once started, oxygen therapy is usually lifelong.

Why do I need an LTOT assessment?

At sea level the air contains 21% oxygen – when we breathe our lungs take oxygen from the air and our blood transports it around our bodies. Oxygen is used to make energy and is needed by all of our organs. People with chronic lung problems often have to work harder to get all of the oxygen that their bodies need.

If your lungs cannot keep up with your body's demand for oxygen then you will have low oxygen levels in your blood. This is likely to make you feel breathless and tired, especially when you are moving around. However, some people have low blood oxygen levels and do not feel breathless at all. Equally, some people will feel very breathless but have normal oxygen levels. This is why it is important to be properly assessed if your doctor thinks that you might need extra oxygen at home.



Patient Information

If it's found that you do have low oxygen levels then you can be given supplementary oxygen. It's important that we work out the right amount of oxygen for you; oxygen is a drug and, while it can be helpful, using too much oxygen can be very dangerous.

Oxygen therapy is only given to patients who have low oxygen levels at rest; it is not a treatment for breathlessness or anxiety.

What happens if I am sent for an LTOT assessment?

You should only come for an oxygen assessment if you have not had a chest infection for six weeks. If you need to postpone your appointment then please call the Home Oxygen Team and we will rearrange it for you.

You will come to see the Home Oxygen Team twice; at each appointment we will take a small blood sample while you breathing room air to measure how much oxygen there is in your blood.

If your oxygen levels are low on your first visit then we will ask you to come back for a second visit three weeks later when we will repeat the test again. If your oxygen levels are still low at this second visit then we will ask you to breathe some supplementary oxygen. We will adjust the amount of oxygen you are breathing until it is right for you. We will explain the results to you and answer any questions you have about using oxygen at home.

If your oxygen levels are ok at the first visit, you will not need to come for a second visit. We may ask you to do a walking test to see whether or not you would benefit from using supplementary oxygen when you are walking.

What happens to me after my LTOT assessment is complete?

If you do need supplementary oxygen then we will order this for you and arrange to see you again three months' later to review your oxygen therapy. If everything is going well at this follow-up appointment then we will arrange to see you once every six or 12 months.

Where do I get the oxygen prescription?

After the assessment we will ask for your consent to order oxygen from a company called Baywater, who supply and deliver oxygen in Coventry and Rugby. Baywater usually deliver the oxygen to your home within three working days.

- Baywater usually contact you beforehand to let you know when they are coming;
- A Baywater engineer will come to your home and fully install your oxygen and explain how to use all of the equipment;
- You will be given an information pack by the engineer.

What happens if I have problems with my oxygen?

If you have any problems with any of your oxygen equipment then you should call Baywater. If you have a concern about your oxygen prescription then please call the Home Oxygen Team (Monday-Friday) on 02476 966734.

Side effects

Problems with oxygen therapy are very rare if you use the correct prescription. If you regularly wake up in the morning with a headache after using oxygen therapy then please phone the Home Oxygen Team to arrange a review.

If your nose is becoming very sore or dry when using oxygen then please ask the Home Oxygen Team for advice. You should only use water-based creams on skin that comes into contact with oxygen equipment, for example KY Jelly. Please ask a pharmacist if you need advice.

Can I travel if I have oxygen?

Yes. We recommend that you plan any travel well in advance and always inform travel companies and travel insurers that you use home oxygen. If you are going on holiday then please let Baywater know in advance.

Patient Information

If you are going on holiday in Great Britain then Baywater can often arrange for oxygen equipment to be delivered to your holiday address.

If you plan to travel abroad then Baywater will advise you of how you can continue to use your oxygen therapy when abroad. Please be aware that you may have to pay to use supplementary oxygen when going abroad.

If you plan to fly, then please speak to your GP or Respiratory Consultant about your fitness to fly **before** you book your flight.

The British Lung Foundation can provide a list of companies that insure travellers with oxygen. For more information please ask the Home Oxygen Team for our leaflet *Holidays with Oxygen Therapy*.

Basic Safety

When used correctly oxygen is safe. But you do need to follow some basic safety advice to keep you and those around you safe:

Do not smoke or let anyone smoke (including e-cigarettes) near you when you are using your oxygen.

Smoking will aggravate your condition and is dangerous when using oxygen. Materials burn more vigorously when in contact with oxygen than with air.

- **Do not use e-cigarettes or let anyone else use them:** this includes reusable and disposable electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes), cigars, pipes and similar battery powered tobacco replacement products which use a heating element (atomiser) to produce a vapour resembling smoke. There have been incidences where the e-cigarettes have exploded or ignited whilst being recharged or in an oxygen rich environment.
- **Keep away from naked flames:** all oxygen equipment should be kept well away from naked flames such as candles, open fires and gas cookers.

Patient Information

- **Keep away from heat:** oxygen is not explosive but it will help fires to burn more fiercely. Ensure that your oxygen cylinders and your concentrator are kept away from fires, cookers and heaters etc. Baywater recommend that you keep all oxygen equipment at least 3 m (10 ft) from open fires and at least 1.5 m (5 ft) from closed fires.
- **Turn it off:** turn off the oxygen supply when it is not in use. When using your oxygen concentrator do not leave your mask or cannula in your lap or lying on the bed for any length of time. Oxygen may build up in the material and make it more flammable.

Further Information

If you have further questions or have a problem with your oxygen prescription, please contact the Home Oxygen Team on:

Telephone: 024 7696 6734

Email: uhc-tr.Oxygen-Service@nhs.net

You can contact Baywater on 0800 373 580 or visit their website www.baywater.co.uk for more information.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6734 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

Document History

Department:	Respiratory Physiology
Contact:	02476966734
Updated:	December 2019
Review:	December 2021
Version:	6.1
Reference:	HIC/LFT/1194/11