

## Respiratory physiology

# Long Term Oxygen Therapy

### What is Long Term Oxygen Therapy?

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

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

Research shows that using extra oxygen for at least 15 hours a day, including at night while sleeping, can help you live longer, feel better, and improve your quality of life. Once you start oxygen therapy it is usually something you will need for life.

### Why do you need an LTOT assessment?

At sea level, the air has 21% oxygen. When we breathe, our lungs take in oxygen, and our blood takes it around our body. Oxygen helps create energy and is needed by all our organs. People with long-term lung problems often must work harder to get enough oxygen.

If your lungs cannot get enough oxygen, your blood oxygen levels will be low. This can make you feel breathless and tired, especially when you are active. Some people, have low blood oxygen levels and do not feel breathless, while others may feel breathless but have normal oxygen levels. That is why it is important to be accurately assessed if your doctor thinks you might need extra oxygen at home.

If you have low oxygen levels, you may be given extra oxygen. It's important we work out the right amount for you because oxygen is a drug



## Patient Information

and, while it can be helpful, and too much oxygen can be dangerous.

Oxygen therapy is only for patients with low oxygen levels when resting. It is not used to treat breathlessness or anxiety.

### **What happens if you are 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 change your appointment, please call the Home Oxygen Team on 02476 966734 and we will reschedule it.

You will need to see the Home Oxygen Team twice. At each appointment, we will take a small blood sample while you are breathing room air to check how much oxygen is in your blood.

If your oxygen levels are low at your first visit, we will ask you to come back in 3-4 weeks to repeat the test. If your oxygen levels are still low at the second visit, we will give you extra oxygen to breathe. 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 normal at the first visit, you will not need to come back for a second visit. We might ask you to do a walking test to check if you would benefit from using extra oxygen while walking.

### **What happens after your LTOT assessment is complete?**

If you need extra oxygen, we will order it for you and arrange to see you again in 3 months to review your therapy. If everything is going well at this follow-up appointment, we will then plan to see you every six or 12 months.

### **How do you get the oxygen prescription?**

After the assessment, we will ask for your permission to order oxygen from a company called Baywater, which supplies and delivers oxygen in Coventry and Rugby. Baywater usually deliver the oxygen to your home within 3 working days.

- Baywater will contact you to let you know when they are coming.
- A Baywater engineer will come to your home, install the oxygen, and explain how to use all the equipment. The engineer will also give you an information.

### **What happens if you have problems with your oxygen?**

If you have any problems with your oxygen equipment, please call Baywater. If you have concerns about your oxygen prescription, call the Home Oxygen Team (Monday-Friday) on 02476 966734.

If you are feeling more breathless than usual, it might mean you are unwell. Please seek medical advice. Your oxygen flow rate is set to be safe and enough for you – it should not be changed without seeking medical advice.

### **Side effects**

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

If your nose becomes sore or dry while using oxygen, ask the Home Oxygen Team for advice. Only use water-based creams, like KY Jelly, on skin that touches oxygen equipment, for example KY Jelly. If you need help choosing a cream, please ask a pharmacist for advice.

### **Can you travel if you have oxygen?**

Yes. We recommend planning any travel well in advance and informing travel companies and insurers that you use home oxygen. If you are going on holiday, let Baywater know in advance.

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For holidays in England, Wales, Scotland, or Northern Ireland, Baywater can arrange for oxygen equipment to be delivered to your holiday address for free.

If you are travelling outside the UK, oxygen will need to be privately arranged. You may have to pay the oxygen when going abroad.

If you plan to fly, talk to your GP or Respiratory Consultant about whether you're fit to fly **before** booking.

The British Lung Foundation can provide a list of companies that offer travel insurance for people using oxygen. For more information, ask the Home Oxygen Team for our leaflet, "Holidays with Oxygen Therapy."

## Important safety tips for using oxygen

- **No Smoking: Do not smoke or allow anyone to smoke near you while using oxygen. Smoking can worsen your condition** and is dangerous because materials burn more strongly when in contact with oxygen.
- **E-Cigarettes: Do not use e-cigarettes or allow others to use them near you.** 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 which resembles smoke. There have been cases where e-cigarettes have exploded or caught fire in an oxygen rich environment.
- **Stay away from flames:** Keep all oxygen equipment at least 10 feet (3 metres) away from flames, such as candles, open fires, and gas cookers.
- **Heat sources:** Oxygen is not explosive, but it can make fires burn more fiercely. Keep your oxygen cylinders away from fires, cookers, heaters, hair dryers, straighteners, and such sources. Baywater recommends keeping oxygen equipment at least 5 feet (1.5 metres) from closed fires. Even a small spark ignite oxygen.
- **Avoid oil-based creams:** Lotions, creams, lip balms and skin products may contain paraffin or oil, as they can react with oxygen. Use water-based creams or lubricants instead.

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- **Turn it off:** Turn off the oxygen supply when you are not using it. Do not leave your mask or tube (cannula) in your lap or chair for too long. Oxygen can build up in the material increase fire risk.

## 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

You can contact Baywater on 0800 373 580 or visit their website [www.baywater.co.uk](http://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.

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### Document History

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