

Oxygen Equipment and Use

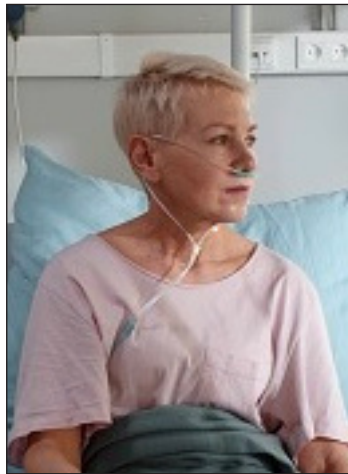
We all need oxygen to survive. People with lung disease or other conditions may not have enough oxygen in their blood. Low levels of oxygen can cause serious problems. Your physician may prescribe oxygen as a medication to increase the amount of oxygen in your blood. The oxygen you get will be more concentrated (higher dose) than the oxygen in the air.

If you have any questions, ask your care team.

Breathing oxygen

Most often, a person who needs oxygen will breathe it in through a nasal cannula, a thin plastic tube placed under the nose (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Nasal cannula



The dose is set at liters per minute. The flow can be continuous (on all the time) or intermittent (on and off).

- **Continuous** – You breathe a constant flow of oxygen.
- **Pulse dose flow** – You use a portable oxygen concentrator (POC). When the POC senses you breathing in, it delivers oxygen. This type of delivery saves oxygen and the POC battery life.

Types of oxygen equipment

Your care team will talk with you about the oxygen system you will use. A durable medical equipment (DME) company will deliver it to your home. You may use 1 of these systems:

Compressed oxygen

Oxygen is stored in a metal tank (Figure 2). It gives you a continuous flow of oxygen. It is portable, so you can bring it with you when you go places. The oxygen is under pressure in the tank so you must be careful handling the tank.

Figure 2. Oxygen tank



Oxygen concentrator

This machine (Figure 3) takes air from your surroundings and filters it. It delivers a pure form of oxygen continuously. It must be plugged into an electrical outlet to work. You can use it at home and at night.

Figure 3. Oxygen concentrator



Portable oxygen concentrator

This is a smaller version of the oxygen concentrator device. It can deliver oxygen through only a pulse dose – it gives you oxygen when you breathe in. You can carry it with you and use it when you leave your home. It has rechargeable batteries and can be plugged into a wall outlet or a car outlet to charge.

Pulse oximeter

A pulse oximeter is a small, electronic device you can put on your finger to measure the oxygen levels in your blood (Figure 4). This is very helpful to monitor your oxygen levels. Your care team will let you know the range that is right for you.

Figure 4. Pulse oximeter



How to get oxygen equipment

A durable medical equipment (DME) company provides medical supplies and equipment, including oxygen therapy devices, that are medically prescribed for you. Your care team works with a DME company that follows Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services guidelines. The choice of the DME company is based on a number of factors including your home zip code, your insurance, and your specific DME needs.

Your care team will work with your insurance and the DME company to arrange equipment and supplies prescribed for you. The DME company will call you within 3 to 5 business days to set up a time to deliver the equipment. They will teach you how to use and care for the equipment.

It is important to know the name of your DME company and how to contact them. They will work with you if there are issues or questions about your supplies and equipment. They will deliver what you need and replace it if there is a problem.

Using oxygen safely

Only use the dose/flow rate of oxygen that was prescribed for you.

Follow these safety tips for using oxygen at home:

- Keep the tank or machine upright and secure.
- Do not use an extension cord.
- Turn off the oxygen source or machine when you are not using it.
- Do not use oils or aerosols near the oxygen unit. This includes air fresheners, hairspray, petroleum jelly, vapor rubs and oil-based lotions.
- Keep the oxygen unit away from any type of heat source and flames (such as a stove or space heater).
- Keep your equipment clean. Follow the DME and manufacturer's instructions for cleaning.
- Do not smoke or be near anyone else who is smoking.
- Do not cook near flames or use electrical appliances while wearing oxygen.
- Always have a fire extinguisher nearby. Call 911 in an emergency.

When to call your physician

Follow your physician's instructions for using oxygen.

Call your physician or advanced practice provider if you have these symptoms.

- Feeling more tired than usual
- Headache
- Feeling confused or anxious
- Changes in your normal breathing
- Fast heartbeat
- Blue or grey lips or fingernails

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department if you have these symptoms.

- Shortness of breath that is getting worse
- Chest pain