

## Ambulatory oxygen therapy: a guide to home oxygen

You have been given oxygen to support your low oxygen levels on exertion. Using the oxygen will help to protect your heart and organs which must work a lot harder when they do not have enough oxygen. It may not affect your breathlessness as this is different to low oxygen levels.

### You have been advised to use oxygen on exertion **ONLY**

It is very important to use the oxygen on exertion only as using it at rest can put you at risk of high carbon dioxide levels which may lead to harmful symptoms, hospital admission or death.

### Do not change the oxygen flow rate without a clinician's recommendation

It is very important to use the oxygen as directed by your clinician. Increasing the oxygen will most likely not affect your breathlessness but may increase your chance of hypercapnia (high carbon dioxide levels). Signs of this include:

- Difficulty in breathing or it becomes noticeably slower or labored.
- Headache, disorientation, agitation, confusion or restlessness
- Drowsiness
- Tremor and muscle twitches
- Flushed skin
- Increased heart rate
- Changes in blood pressure
- Cyanosis: this is a bluish or purplish discoloration of the skin due to inadequate oxygen intake.
- Numbness or tingling in the face, hands or feet

If you notice a combination of these symptoms, **it is important to seek medical advice immediately**. If ignored, it can lead to respiratory failure. Please discuss this with your doctor or nurse if you are concerned.

### Who will know I'm on oxygen?

You will need to complete a consent form. Vivisol (home oxygen provider) will need your information and permission to send an engineer to your home to install the equipment and explain how to use, deliver new supplies and service your equipment.

The fire brigade is also informed and may contact you. The local fire service will often offer a free visit to assess the safety of your property and install smoke alarms where necessary. Your GP will also be informed and sent a copy of your home

oxygen order form (HOOFF), this acts as a prescription and is completed by a specialist.

## **Vivisol Contact Centre: 0800 917 9840 (Available 24/7)**

### **Holiday oxygen**

If you wish to go on holiday in the UK, oxygen equipment can be arranged to your holiday destination. Ensure that the accommodation is happy to have oxygen equipment on the property and either call Vivisol or the RESPS team to organise. Please note that oxygen equipment provided by Vivisol cannot be taken abroad.

### **Safety**

**You must not smoke while on oxygen.** This includes e-cigarettes and vaping. Other people may not smoke in the same building as the oxygen.

Keep away from gas fires, open flames (including candles), gas hobs and gas ovens while wearing oxygen. If you have gas in the property (not including a boiler) please remove oxygen 30 minutes before going near the flame.

Do not apply Vaseline to your nose as this is petroleum based. We recommend water based creams such as KY jelly or Nasogel should your nose become sore.

### **When will I be reviewed?**

If the oxygen is new, one of the respiratory support workers will visit your home in the next 4-8 weeks to check that you are managing well with the oxygen and that there are no safety issues.

We will assess you every 6 to 12 months and amend your oxygen prescription if necessary. If you have any concerns or queries about your oxygen, please give the RESPS team a call.

### **What if I do not want the oxygen therapy?**

If you do not wish to continue with the oxygen therapy, please discuss it with your doctor or nurse. The oxygen equipment can be removed at any point should you not wish to continue with it.

### **Ways that can help your breathlessness include:**

- Fan therapy:
  - Using a fan on your face stimulates nerves and tricks your body into thinking you are getting more air, reducing the sensation of breathlessness.
- Pursed lip breathing:
  - Breathing out through pursed lips. This helps open the airways more and reduces the amount of trapped air in the lungs.
- Keeping active:
  - By keeping active, oxygen efficiency is improved in the muscles and general fitness will help reduce breathlessness and can help to reduce frequency of exacerbations.

- Pace yourself:
  - Spread your tasks throughout the day and try to slow down when you do them.
- Breathing control:
  - Take some time to breathe in and out deeply with as little effort as possible. Ensure you are in a comfortable position and try to let go of any tension, closing your eyes if possible. Try to slow your breathing.
- Oramorph:
  - Discuss with your nurse or doctor about whether Oramorph (liquid morphine) would be suitable for you. It can help to reduce the sensation of breathlessness.

## Support for you

There are Breathe Easy groups available in Bexhill and Eastbourne which are run by people with lung conditions for people with lung conditions. Ask your RESPS practitioner for more information.

The British Lung Foundation have a helpline **0300 0030 555** which is available Monday to Friday 9-5pm for general advice about your lung condition and its management. They also have a useful website with lots of information:

<https://www.blf.org.uk/>

## **Regional East Sussex Pulmonary Service (RESPS)** **Tel: 0300 131 5317**

**(Monday to Friday 8am-6pm, Weekends and Bank holidays 9am-5pm)**

There is a voicemail should you wish to leave a message outside of these times. Please note that voicemail messages will not be picked up until the office opens again.

Review date:	Oxygen prescription:

## Important information

This patient information is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

## Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the patient experience team on 0300 131 4784 or [esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net).

## Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

## Other formats

**If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please call 0300 131 4434 or email [esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net)**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

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## Reference

The directorate group that has agreed this patient information leaflet: Medicine

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References:

British Thoracic Society, Guidelines for Home Oxygen Use in Adults, *BTS 2015*. Available at: [British Thoracic Society guidelines for home oxygen use in adults: accredited by NICE | Thorax](#)

National Institute and Health and Care Excellence, Oxygen, *NICE 2024*. Available at: <https://bnf.nice.org.uk/treatment-summaries/oxygen/>