



## What Is Oxygen Therapy?

Oxygen therapy is a treatment that provides you with extra oxygen, a gas that your body needs to work well. Normally, your lungs absorb oxygen from the air. However, some diseases and conditions can prevent you from getting enough oxygen.

Oxygen therapy may help you function better and be more active. Oxygen is supplied through a skinny or wide bore tubing and is delivered to your lungs in one of the following ways:

- Through a nasal cannula, which consists of two sections of skinny tubing, two small plastic tubes, (prongs), that are placed in both nostrils which then loops up over face and around both ears.
- Through a face mask, which fits over your nose and mouth and secures around the back of your head.
- Through a trach mask, which fits over your tracheostomy tube or open stoma that is in the front of your neck for breathing.

Oxygen therapy can be done in a hospital, another medical setting, or at home. If you need oxygen therapy for a chronic (ongoing) disease or condition, you might receive home oxygen therapy. Your doctor will decide whether you need oxygen therapy based upon the results of a test, such as an arterial blood gas, (lab work to check Oxygen level), and/or a pulse oximetry test. (Oximetry uses a probe that is placed on your finger to measure amount of Oxygen.) These tests measure how much oxygen is in your blood. A low oxygen level is a sign that you need oxygen therapy. Oxygen is considered a medicine, so your doctor must prescribe it. You will receive a “prescription” for it which will note the flow as a numerical number, (ex: 2 liters/minute). Also listed is how your Oxygen is to be used which may be 24hrs/day, with activity, or at night.

Generally, most home care patients are set up with a unit called a concentrator that makes Oxygen and is plugged into an outlet. These patients are also given extra cylinders for back up in case of power outage or for traveling. In the hospital, the Oxygen is pumped in from a larger container for the entire facility. In each patient room, there is a flow meter that is plugged into the wall outlet which is where your tubing connects.

Oxygen therapy helps many people function better and be more active. It also may help:

- Decrease shortness of breath and fatigue (tiredness)
- Improve sleep in some people who have sleep-related breathing disorders
- Increase the lifespan of some people who have COPD
- Decrease other symptoms of related disorders like cardiac and kidney problems

Although you may need oxygen therapy long term, it doesn't have to limit your daily routine. Portable oxygen units can make it easier for you to move around and do many daily activities. Talk with your doctor if you have questions about whether certain activities are safe for you.

A home equipment provider will work with you to make sure you have the supplies and equipment you need. Trained staff also will show you how to use the equipment correctly and safely.

Oxygen therapy generally is safe, but it can pose a fire hazard. To use your oxygen safely, follow the instructions you receive from your home equipment provider.