

Long-term oxygen therapy

This leaflet provides information for patients and their relatives about how best to use oxygen therapy at home. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is long-term oxygen therapy (LTOT)?

Long-term oxygen therapy is the use of oxygen therapy for at least 16 hours a day. It is usually delivered by a machine called an oxygen concentrator which runs off the mains electricity supply. The concentrator takes air from the room and processes it into oxygen. This oxygen is then delivered to you either through small tubes placed at the nose or sometimes through a mask. A long piece of plastic tubing that will also be supplied will enable you to use oxygen when moving around inside your home.

Why do I need long-term oxygen therapy?

Oxygen is a gas that is vital to all of the cells in our bodies. Some people may have low oxygen levels in their blood, for example because of a lung problem. Blood tests taken at the hospital have shown that the level of oxygen in your blood is low. Having low oxygen for long periods of time can place the heart and other major organs under stress. Using long-term oxygen therapy will increase the level of oxygen in your blood and help to protect your heart and other organs from this stress. Some people also feel less breathless and have more energy when using oxygen.

How much oxygen do I need?

The amount of oxygen that you need, which is sometimes called 'flow rate', is worked out for you after careful assessment by your specialist.

How many hours a day do I need to wear oxygen for?

Long-term oxygen therapy usually needs to be used for at least 16 hours a day to ensure that you get the protective benefit. Usually this will mean wearing oxygen therapy overnight and then 'topping up' the hours during the day.

Your specialist will use the space below to write down your usual oxygen prescription:

Flow rate:

Hours per day:

What if I want to go out during the day?

If you are active and leave the house on a regular basis, you will also be supplied with portable oxygen cylinders. These are small oxygen cylinders which you can take out and about so that you can use oxygen outside your home. You can either carry them in a rucksack or push them in a trolley.

How long will I need long-term oxygen therapy for?

It is common to experience low oxygen levels following a flare-up of your condition. In over half of patients, oxygen levels will return to normal within a few months and the oxygen therapy can then be stopped. However, for some patients oxygen levels stay low, meaning that therapy will need to be continued. You will be reviewed by a respiratory specialist six weeks after starting the therapy to check if you still need it.

Who will supply my home oxygen?

Home oxygen will be supplied to you by a medical gas company on behalf of the NHS. An engineer will install the equipment and explain to you and/or your relatives/carers how to use it.

Your specialist will use the space below to write down the name and number of your oxygen supplier:

Oxygen supplier.....

Contact number.....

Can I still go away on holiday?

Yes. It is important to try to live life to the full. If you do wish to go away on holiday, you should contact the oxygen company and your oxygen nurse as soon as possible. Oxygen will usually be arranged via your usual supplier if you are planning to travel in the UK. For travel abroad, you will have to arrange for oxygen yourself but your oxygen supplier can advise you how to do this. If you are planning to fly, it may be necessary to discuss any requirements with your doctor.

Can oxygen be harmful?

Oxygen is very safe when used properly. It is important not to adjust the flow rate of your oxygen concentrator or cylinder as it has been prescribed for you after careful assessment. Increasing the flow rate may be particularly harmful. If you feel you are more short of breath than usual, do not turn the oxygen up but contact your GP as soon as possible.

Please use the equipment according to the manufacturer's safety instructions to avoid personal harm and, importantly, fire risk. It is essential that neither you nor anybody else smokes near the oxygen equipment. Oxygen helps combustion so smoking near the equipment increases the risk of fire and burns. Also, oxygen should not be used near naked flames or other heat sources, such as cookers or heaters.

Will it cost me anything to use oxygen at home?

The concentrator runs off your electricity supply so your electricity bill may be slightly higher than normal. Your oxygen supplier will pay the extra charges of your electricity bill back to you.

What should I do if my oxygen concentrator stops working?

Contact your oxygen supply company on their 24-hour number. They will be able to arrange replacement equipment.

Appointments at King's

We have teamed up with King's College Hospital in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at King's. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about home oxygen therapy, please contact the integrated respiratory team on **020 7188 8636** or **07796 178719** (Monday to Sunday), 9am to 4.30pm).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

British Lung Foundation

Provides more information about your lung condition and oxygen treatment.

t: 03000 030 555 **w:** www.blf.org.uk

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

e: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas' **t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.

t: 020 7188 8815 **fax:** 020 7188 5953

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

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