

# Oxygen therapy with the @home team

**This information leaflet has been developed to provide information for you and your relatives about how best to use oxygen therapy at home, during your recovery from illness. It also gives details of some contacts you may find useful.**

## What is oxygen therapy?

In this instance oxygen therapy is the use of oxygen 24 hours a day. It may be possible for you to have short periods of around 5 minutes off the oxygen for comfort, for example if you need to shower. 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 through small tubes placed in your nose.

## Why do I need oxygen therapy at the moment?

Oxygen is a gas that is vital to all of the cells in our bodies. Sometimes people may experience low oxygen levels in their blood, for example, because of a lung problem or a flare up of a lung condition. A test taken at the hospital has found the level of oxygen in your blood to be low. Having low oxygen for long periods of time can place the heart and other major organs under stress. Using 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 feel as though they have more energy when using oxygen during their recovery.

## How much oxygen do I need?

The amount of oxygen you need (called a 'flow rate') is worked out for you while you are in hospital. It is based on how much oxygen you have in your blood, which we can find out by taking a blood sample from your wrist and by placing a probe on your finger. You must not alter the flow rate or any other settings on the oxygen concentrator yourself as this can be dangerous.

## How often do I need to wear the oxygen for?

Your oxygen therapy needs to be worn and used for 24 hours a day to help while your body recovers. This will be reviewed and monitored closely by the @home team visiting you. The @home team will visit you at home up to four times a day, to measure your oxygen levels with a monitor that is placed on your finger, blood tests and by listening to your breathing. Plans will be made to ensure the oxygen is set up prior to you going home or you will be met by the team on the day you are sent home from hospital.

Your oxygen prescription will be written on a chart which will be left with you.

## How long will I need oxygen therapy for?

It is common to experience low oxygen levels following a flare up of your condition or illness. For some patients oxygen levels continue to be low, meaning that oxygen therapy will need to be continued. You will be reviewed by the @home team within your own home to decide if you still need ongoing oxygen therapy.

## Who will supply me with home oxygen?

The Guy's and St Thomas' @home team will provide you with a portable oxygen concentrator, which will be delivered to your home or place of residence.

## Can oxygen be harmful?

Oxygen is very safe when used properly. It is important not to adjust the flow rate of your oxygen concentrator from the level it has been set at as it has been carefully prescribed for you and therefore could be dangerous to do so. In particular, increasing the flow rate may be harmful. If you feel you are more short of breath than usual **do not turn the oxygen up** but contact the @home team as soon as possible. They will review your needs and alter the flow rate if appropriate.

To avoid personal harm and fire risk, please use the equipment according to the manufacturer's safety instructions.

**It is important to make sure that neither you nor anybody else smokes near the oxygen equipment as this could lead to explosion. Oxygen must not be used near to naked flames or other heat sources such as cigarettes, cookers or heaters as it is dangerous.**

The use of oils and oil-based products is particularly hazardous in an oxygen-rich environment as they can ignite very easily and burn violently. You should therefore avoid using alcohol gel, and grease/oil-based creams, moisturisers and make-up.

**The oxygen concentrator will run on battery for a maximum of two hours, so we strongly recommend keeping it plugged into the mains whenever possible.**

## Will it cost me anything to have oxygen at home?

The concentrator runs off your electricity so using it may mean that your electricity bill is slightly higher than normal. There will no charge for the loan or use of the oxygen machine. It will be collected by the @home team when it is no longer needed.

## What should I do if my oxygen concentrator stops working?

The @home team will visit you regularly during the day so if you have any concerns about the oxygen concentrator please discuss it with them. The @home service runs from 8am-11pm and you can contact them on the number below during these hours. If your oxygen concentrator breaks outside of these hours and you start to feel unwell, call an ambulance on 999 and return to hospital.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about home oxygen therapy, please contact the @home team on **020 3049 5751** (every day from 8am – 11pm).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets).

## Further sources of information

### British Lung Foundation

Provide information, advice and support for people with lung conditions.

**t:** 084 5850 5020 **w:** [www.lunguk.org](http://www.lunguk.org)

### 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

### Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS)

**e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints)

**e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@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:

**t:** 020 7188 8815 **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

### 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](http://www.nhs.uk)

### Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, and to become a member:

**t:** 0800 731 0319 **e:** [members@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:members@gstt.nhs.uk)

**w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership)

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