

# Ambulatory Oxygen

This information leaflet has been developed to provide information for patients and their relatives about how best to use oxygen therapy at home. It also gives details of some contacts you may find useful. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

## What is ambulatory oxygen (AO) therapy?

Ambulatory oxygen literally means 'oxygen for walking', but it can be used for other types of activity that make you breathless. It is designed to help you continue to get out of the house and stay active and sociable.

## Why do I need ambulatory oxygen therapy?

Oxygen is a gas that is vital to all of the cells in our bodies. During exercise and activity, our cells require more oxygen than while we are resting as our muscles are working harder. Most people get enough oxygen from room air but some people may need extra oxygen for exercise or activity, for example because of a heart or lung problem. After monitoring your oxygen level when you walk, we have shown that your oxygen level decreases on activity. There is some evidence to show that using oxygen while you carry out daily activities may help you to feel less breathless and enjoy life more.

## When should I use it?

You should use it when you are doing activities that make you breathless. Patients have reported that it is useful when they are having a bath or when dressing, walking to the shops, cleaning windows, vacuuming and doing other household chores.

## How long will I need this for?

Following a flare-up of your condition it is common to experience low oxygen levels. In approximately half of patients, oxygen levels improve again over the next few weeks and months and ambulatory oxygen will not be required. However, for some patients, oxygen levels on activity will continue to be low, in which case your oxygen will be continued. You will be reviewed by a respiratory specialist approximately 6 -8 weeks after starting ambulatory oxygen to see if it is still required.

## 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 team as soon as possible. If you are planning to fly it may be useful to discuss whether you would require oxygen for the flight with your GP or consultant.

## Can oxygen be harmful?

Oxygen is very safe when used properly. It is important not to adjust your prescription as it has been prescribed for you after careful assessment and consideration. In particular, increasing the flow of oxygen or using the AO when you are resting can be harmful. If you feel you are more short of breath than usual do not turn the oxygen up but instead contact your GP as soon as possible to let them know.

Oxygen is flammable therefore smoking whilst using oxygen is dangerous and can be fatal. We strongly advise that you do not smoke or have any other naked flames (e.g. gas cookers, open or gas fires or matches) within 1.5 metres of any oxygen device, even if the device is turned off. If you would like help to stop smoking, please contact the oxygen team below or call the Trust stop smoking service on **020 7188 0995**, or call the NHS Smoking Helpline on **0300 123 1044**.

## What if using oxygen scares me?

AO is not intended to take over your life, it is meant to help you continue to live life to the full. If you find you are scared by using the oxygen or you are worried about what this may mean for your future it may be helpful to discuss this with the oxygen team. If you find that AO or living with a long-term condition in general are affecting your mood then you may benefit from contacting the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies team on **020 3228 2194**. Some oxygen patients have reported that they found this very beneficial.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about home oxygen therapy, please contact the Integrated Respiratory Team who are oxygen specialists on **020 7188 8636** (open 7 days a week 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](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## Useful sources of information

### Contact the oxygen providers

Home oxygen is 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 others how to use it. If you have concerns about deliveries or the devices themselves, please contact the company which provide oxygen in your area:  
Air Liquide (London): 0808 143 9991  
Dolby Vivasol (South East England): 0500 823 773

**British Lung Foundation** – For more information about your lung condition and oxygen treatment

t: 08458 50 50 20 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 and Accessible 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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