

Patient information

Oxygen Therapy: Using Portable Oxygen Cylinders

Why might I need oxygen therapy?

Our bodies need a certain amount of oxygen to function properly. Oxygen is needed for many things such as helping with muscle function, digesting food and helping our brains to think!

If you have a long-term lung or heart condition you may struggle to get enough oxygen into your body because of irreversible damage to your lung tissue, increased lung stiffness, or because your lungs produce a lot of phlegm. All of these problems can reduce your lungs' ability to take up enough oxygen to supply your internal organs.

Some conditions where you may need oxygen therapy include:

- COPD or emphysema
- Interstitial lung disease or lung fibrosis
- Bronchiectasis
- Lung cancer
- Pulmonary hypertension
- Severe heart disease
- Heart failure
- Neuromuscular conditions (eg MS, MND etc)

Oxygen levels that remain low for long periods of time can be dangerous and can make you very poorly.

If your oxygen levels in your blood are too low, then you may be referred for an assessment for possible oxygen therapy.

Symptoms of low oxygen levels include persistent headaches, dizziness, high blood pressure, increased breathlessness and confusion.

Using oxygen therapy

Once it has been determined that you need to have oxygen therapy you may be issued with **oxygen cylinders** to provide your oxygen.

Please be aware that **oxygen is a prescribed drug**. It is vitally important that you use it as you have been prescribed, in order to gain the best benefits. **Too much oxygen can be as dangerous as too little.**

If you have been prescribed **ambulatory oxygen therapy** then you should be using this whenever you are up on your feet and moving about. You may be advised that you can remove your oxygen therapy when sitting down and resting, but you will need to confirm this with your home oxygen therapy team or other prescriber.

If you have been prescribed **long-term oxygen therapy** then you will probably need to use your oxygen both when sitting down and when up on your feet and moving about, as your body will need more constant oxygen therapy. This may mean that you will need to be provided with a static concentrator machine, for you to use in your house. Your oxygen home oxygen therapy team will talk you through this if this is appropriate for you.

Please note: once you have been prescribed home oxygen therapy your prescription will be reviewed on a regular basis.

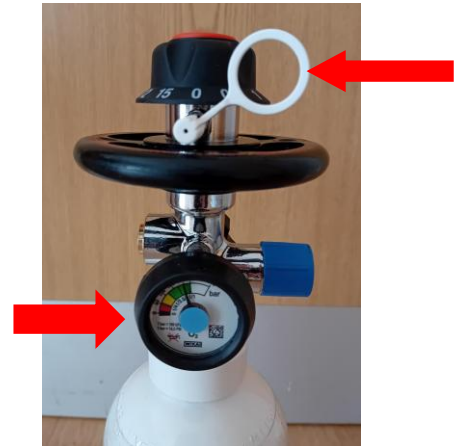
Side effects of oxygen therapy

If you have been identified as 'at risk' and have an oxygen alert card and you experience headaches, a faster than normal pulse rate, disorientation or confusion when using your oxygen you must inform your home oxygen therapy team as soon as possible.

Using your oxygen cylinders

It is important if you need oxygen therapy that you always make sure that you have enough cylinders to hand. If you are going out for the day, always make sure that you have spare oxygen cylinders with you so that you don't run out!

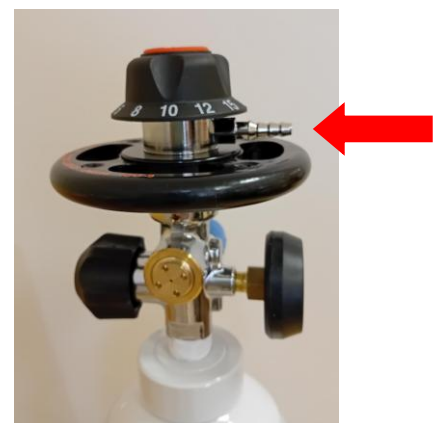
- 1) Always make sure that your oxygen cylinders are full before you leave home. The indicator arm should be pointing to the green portion of the dial. Once you have checked this the white ring-pull that covers the oxygen port should be removed.



- 2) Next, before using your cylinder, make sure that the **black valve is completely open**. It must be turned to the left (anticlockwise) as far as it will go. Failure to do this will restrict the flow of oxygen to the user and could make them unwell.



- 3) Next, attach the oxygen tubing to the cylinder port, making sure it is firmly in place and that there are no kinks or holes in the tubing.



- 4) Finally, turn the dial on the top of the cylinder to the number of litres you have been prescribed (ie. 2 for 2 litres).



Oxygen trolleys:

Most portable oxygen cylinders are supplied with a rucksack-style carrier to make it easier to manage.

However, the average oxygen cylinder (when full) weighs approx. 3.5kg. If you find this too heavy to carry then please ask your oxygen therapy team if you can be issued with a trolley instead.



How long will my oxygen cylinders last?

The length of time your oxygen cylinders will last will depend on how many litres per minute you are using (the higher the litres the quicker you will use the cylinders up). It also depends on how full your cylinders are.

Please see the tables on the next page to give you an idea of usage times.

Freedom 300 cylinder (F300) - weight 2.6kg when full



Cylinder size	What is your oxygen flow rate?	How long will my oxygen cylinder last? (if it is 100% full)
F300 cylinder	15 litres/min	20 mins
	8 litres/min	38 mins
	6 litres/min	51 mins
	4 litres/min	1 hour 17 mins
	3 litres/min	1 hour 42 mins
	2 litres/min	2 hours 34 mins
	1.5 litres/min	3 hours 25 mins
	1 litre/min	5 hours 8 mins
	0.5 litres/min	10 hours 16 mins

Freedom 400 cylinder (F400) - weight 3.7kg when full



Cylinder size	What is your oxygen flow rate?	How long will my oxygen cylinder last? (if it is 100% full)
F400 cylinder	15 litres/min	28 mins
	12 litres/min	35 mins
	10 litres/min	43 mins
	8 litres/min	53 mins
	6 litres/min	1 hour 11 mins
	4 litres/min	1 hour 25 mins
	3 litres/min	1 hour 47 mins
	2 litres/min	2 hours 23 mins
	1.5 litres/min	3 hours 35 mins
	1 litre/min	7 hours 10 mins
	0.5 litres/min	14 hours 20 mins

Smoking and oxygen therapy



It is vitally important that you **DO NOT** smoke cigarettes, vapes, E-cigarettes or use naked flames near oxygen or the cylinders as this could cause an explosion.

You should also not use your oxygen therapy near anyone else who is smoking or vaping for the same reasons.

Choosing to ignore this advice could cause serious burns to the user and in some circumstances cause an explosion which could put yourself and those around you in danger.

It is for these reasons that it has now been made policy in West Suffolk that if you are a current smoker you will not be assessed for oxygen therapy. You will need to have quit smoking for 6 weeks and show consistency with this before you are considered for an assessment.

If you have been prescribed oxygen therapy, having quit smoking, and you start smoking again then your oxygen may be legally removed or withheld for safety reasons.

Other dangers

You should not use flammable liquids, cleaning fluids or petroleum based emollients (Vaseline or lip balms) near oxygen as they could cause a fire, burns or an explosion.

Water-based face/lip products or products such as KY gel (for sore noses) should be used instead.

Also be advised that you should not use your oxygen near gas or electric hobs, BBQs, electrical devices or fireworks.

Home and car insurance

If you are prescribed oxygen therapy and are storing oxygen cylinders at your property, then it is important that you inform your insurance company. This should not affect your insurance premiums, but will mean that you should be fully covered in the event of a claim.

It is also important to inform your car insurance company if you are transporting or using oxygen cylinders in your car so that you should be fully covered in the event of a claim. Always make sure that oxygen cylinders are secured safely in your car. They can make dangerous missiles in the event of an accident!

However, you do not need to let the DVLA know that you use oxygen unless you suffer with dizziness or fainting episodes.

Important advice and regular checks

- Always make sure that your oxygen cylinders are stored in an upright position.
- Make sure that you have smoke detectors fitted in your home.
- If you hear any hissing noises when your oxygen cylinder is turned off, or you can feel oxygen escaping, please turn off the device immediately and contact your provider (Baywater Healthcare).
- Make sure you clean your nasal cannula, or mask, regularly (at least twice per week) and change them approximately every 2-4 weeks. If you have a cold or chest infection then this procedure should be carried out more frequently.
- Make sure that you check your oxygen tubing at least twice per week to ensure that there are no kinks or holes. Kinks or holes in the tubing will reduce the flow of oxygen to the user and could be dangerous.
- Make sure that you don't run too low before considering when to order more cylinders. Your oxygen supplier will always try to deliver as soon as possible, but occasionally there can be unforeseen delays (especially at busy times of the year such as Easter, Christmas and Bank Holidays).

Holidays in the UK

Using oxygen should not restrict you holidaying in the UK, but there are a few checks you should carry out first:

- check that your hotel, etc are happy to accommodate you if you use oxygen and that they are happy to store your oxygen cylinders.
- make sure that your oxygen provider can deliver oxygen to your UK holiday destination. Please try to give them about 6 weeks notice (especially at busy times like Easter, Christmas and Bank Holidays).

You will need to give your provider details such as holiday dates and where you are staying.

Holidays abroad

If you are planning to fly abroad and you use oxygen therapy then you will need to have a **Fitness to Fly Test** prior to going. Flying at a higher altitude can reduce your body's ability to take up enough oxygen and could be dangerous. Your GP should be able to help you organise this test.

Always check with individual airlines as to their policies for supplying you with oxygen during the flight.

If you need oxygen during your holiday abroad then you will need to arrange to hire/rent oxygen cylinders in the country of your holiday destination as UK oxygen providers **do not allow their equipment to be taken out of the UK**. You will need to organise and pay for this yourself.

If travelling to Europe you also will need a valid Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC).

UK home oxygen suppliers:

- **Baywater Healthcare:** covers East Anglia, the North West of England, Yorkshire & Humberside, the West Midlands and Wales.
Call: 0800 373 580
- **BOC:** covers the East Midlands and Northern Ireland
Call: 0800 136 603
- **Dolby Vivisol:** covers the North East & South of England and Scotland
Call: 0800 917 9840 (UK)
Call: 0800 833 531 (Scotland)

Asthma and Lung UK (previously known as the British Lung Foundation) also have a friendly team who would be happy to answer any questions that you may have on oxygen, oxygen suppliers and travelling with oxygen. They can be contacted on:

Tel: 0300 222 5800 (between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday) **or**

helpline@asthmaandlung.org.uk

Useful contacts

If you have already been prescribed home oxygen and have any questions, need any advice regarding your prescription, or need to re-arrange or cancel an oxygen assessment or review, please contact your home oxygen therapy team on **0300 123 2425** (West Suffolk).

Clinical research

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust is actively involved in clinical research. Your doctor, clinical team or the research and development department may contact you regarding specific clinical research studies that you might be interested in participating in. If you do not wish to be contacted for these purposes, please email info.gov@wsh.nsh.uk. This will in no way affect the care or treatment you receive.

Accessibility

If you require this leaflet in a different format, please contact the patient advice and liaison service on 01284 712555 or email PALS@wsh.nhs.uk

If you would like any information regarding access to our Trust services and facilities, please visit the website for Accessible: <https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>

