

Home oxygen therapy

Home oxygen therapy is breathing in air that contains more oxygen than normal. The oxygen is given through nasal prongs or a mask connected to a device in your home.

Benefits of home oxygen therapy

Home oxygen therapy can be useful if you do not have enough oxygen in your blood.

It can help with a variety of lung conditions including:

- chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- shortness of breath
- feeling tired all the time

Getting assessed for home oxygen therapy

Your doctor (which could be your GP or hospital doctor) will refer you to a specialist clinic if they think your symptoms can be helped by home oxygen therapy.

You may also be assessed:

- during a hospital admission
- when attending a specialist physiotherapist or nurse-led outpatient clinic

Blood tests or oxygen sensors are used to check the amount of oxygen in your blood. You may also be asked to breathe into a device that checks how well your lungs are working. This test is called [spirometry](#).

Using home oxygen therapy

The main ways of using home oxygen therapy are:

- by placing short tubes in your nostrils (nasal prongs or nasal cannula)
- using a mask over your nose and mouth

Oxygen can also be given through other breathing devices you may be using at home. For example, a BiPap or CPAP machine.

There are 5 types of devices that can be used to give you oxygen. These can give you either a continuous flow of oxygen or a pulsed flow. A pulsed flow is when the device only gives you oxygen when you take a breath.

Devices that may be used include:

- an oxygen concentrator - gives a constant flow of oxygen
- portable cylinders - come in different sizes and can give constant or pulsed flow
- portable devices called a 'Sequel' (constant flow of oxygen) or an Inogen machine (pulsed flow only)
- liquid oxygen - can give a constant or pulsed flow

large oxygen cylinders are provided as backup in case there may be any problems with connection to the electricity supply

An engineer will install the equipment and explain how to use it safely. They will check for any household risks before installing the equipment.

Oxygen concentrator machine

An oxygen concentrator is recommended if you need to have oxygen for most of the day, including when you're asleep.

The machine is about the size of a home printer and plugs into an electrical socket.

Portable oxygen cylinders

Portable cylinders come in different sizes. It may be possible to use a small, portable oxygen cylinder or another portable device outside your home. This is called portable oxygen or ambulatory oxygen.

Most portable oxygen cylinders or other portable devices weigh around 2kg. They are small enough to fit inside a small backpack or shopping trolley. This size cylinder holds just under 2 hours worth of oxygen. A device called a conserver can be added to the cylinder to make it last longer.

If you have problems carrying the device, your physiotherapist may be able to give you a special frame to help you carry it. The companies supplying the equipment can give you a trolley to help you push or pull the device rather than carrying it.

Inogen is a portable battery-operated device about the size of a handbag. It can be carried in a shoulder bag or in a trolley. It needs to be plugged in to charge it regularly.

A sequel machine is a large portable battery-operated device that is about the size of a medium suitcase. It needs to be plugged in to charge it regularly.

Portable oxygen cylinders are not suitable for everyone. Your physiotherapist or nurse will assess you to make sure you need one and which is the most suitable one for you.

Large oxygen cylinders

Large oxygen cylinders are only needed as a backup cylinder in case you may have any problems with the electricity supply.

Oxygen suppliers

There are 2 companies in Ireland that provide home oxygen services.

Contact your supplier if you have a question about your device.

Air Liquide Healthcare

Phone: [1800 240 202](tel:1800240202)

HealthIE@airliquide.ie

Vivisol

Phone: [1800 350 300](tel:1800350300)

patientsupport@vivisol.ie

Going on holiday

You should be able to go on holiday while using oxygen. Make sure that you're well enough to travel and plan your trip in advance.

If you're going on holiday in Ireland, talk to your oxygen supplier to see if it's possible for oxygen to be delivered to your destination. Try to give them as much notice as possible.

Travelling abroad

Speak to your oxygen clinic if you're thinking about going on holiday, particularly if you want to go abroad.

A fitness to fly test may be needed and this takes time to organise. Some airlines need a letter from your consultant or a copy of your prescription.

You may need an assessment for a different oxygen device for travelling as not all devices are suitable for travelling by air.

You will need to leave time for this assessment and to order the device in time for your holiday abroad.

You will also need travel insurance.

[Going abroad and air travel for patients with COPD - copd.ie](http://copd.ie)

Do

- ✓ install fire alarms and smoke detectors in your home and make sure they're working
- ✓ tell your local fire brigade that you have oxygen at home
- ✓ keep your device at least 3 metres away from any appliances that use an open flame, such as a gas cooker or gas fire

- ✓ keep your device at least 1.5 metres away from other electrical appliances, such as a television, hair dryer or electric heater

Don't

- ✗ do not smoke, or let anyone smoke near you, when using your device – smoking will make your oxygen therapy far less effective
- ✗ do not use, or store your oxygen in a room with an open fire
- ✗ do not use flammable liquids, such as cleaning fluid, paint thinner or aerosols when using your device
- ✗ do not use oil-based emollients, such as Vaseline, when using your device

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