

Introduction to Oxygen

Do you need supplemental oxygen?

- Supplemental oxygen is used to keep your oxygen at a normal level;
- Oxygen needs to be prescribed;
- To be covered by insurance, you need a doctor's note showing that:
 - your O2 saturation level falls below 88% either at rest or with exercise
 - your O2 saturation rises to over 90% with supplemental O2
- If your oxygen level stays above 88%, you likely don't need to be prescribed oxygen even if you are short of breath;
- People don't become addicted to oxygen; it is thought that keeping your levels normal can allow you to do more activity, and can prevent other complications;
- Your doctor will write you a prescription based on the amount (typically liters per minute "LPM") of supplemental O2 needed to bring your oxygen saturation level up to over 90%;
- The prescription may be for different levels of oxygen for rest of walking/exercising.

Starting up with an oxygen provider

- You will need to get set up with an O2 company that serves your area to get a home concentrator and a portable system;
- Unless you just need oxygen at night, you will need to get both a home concentrator to use when moving around your house, and a portable delivery system that you can take out of the house.

Home concentrators

- These home concentrators concentrate oxygen from the air; they require electricity, but can't become empty. You may be given backup tanks in case you lose power;
- The concentrator can make noise and vibrate, so think about whether that will be disruptive in certain place;
- The longest tubing that you can get is 50 feet long so make sure you can get to the areas you use frequently.

Portable systems

Two options exist for portable O2 delivery systems – companies typically have both options:

- Portable tanks that deliver O2 through a regulator;
- Personal concentrators that run on electricity (so need batteries or to be plugged in).

With either, oxygen can be delivered as "continuous flow" or "pulse dose".

- Continuous Flow (CF) delivers the oxygen at a constant rate.;
- Pulse Dose (PD) oxygen provides oxygen in a pulse timed with your breathing;
- Levels of oxygen provided by each system aren't directly comparable. Using 2L of continuous flow

oxygen on your home concentrator does not mean that you use "2" on pulse dose;

- Typically, you need a higher setting on PD to get the same oxygen levels that you achieve with your CF device, and there are limits to how much oxygen can be provided with pulse dosing;
- The best way to be sure that you are using enough oxygen and at the correct flow rate is to measure your levels with a pulse-oximeter;
- Your needs may change over time.

Using your oxygen

- Make sure your nasal cannula is comfortable! Finding the most comfortable cannula is a big factor in supporting your compliance with using supplemental oxygen;
- Consider oxygen conserving devices if your needs are rising – a device such as an Oxymizer Pendant could allow you to use a lower flow.

Considerations for travel

- Talk to your oxygen provider about arranging oxygen at your destination;
- Some companies are nation-wide, which can make the process of arranging oxygen away from home easier; other companies will help you rent equipment when away from home;
- Talk to your doctor about travelling by airplane, since you might need more oxygen for a flight than on land;
- If traveling by airplane and need to use oxygen, check the carrier's website for guidelines about flying with oxygen. You probably will need a note from your doctor, and you may need extra batteries.

