

Supplemental Oxygen

Why might I need supplemental oxygen?

If the lungs cannot supply the blood to deliver sufficient oxygen to your body, then the heart must work harder to meet your body's oxygen demand. This may strain your heart, resulting in a rapid pulse, dizziness and fatigue. In fact, the whole body (especially the heart and the brain) is affected by low oxygen. Oxygen therapy will protect your body and improve your general well being. Some patients live longer as a result of oxygen therapy.

Why might I not need supplemental oxygen?

Oxygen therapy is not needed by everyone with a respiratory condition, even if they are very short of breath. Oxygen should be used the same way as a medication. The decision is based on the measurement of oxygen in your arterial blood. If the levels are within the normal range then supplemental oxygen will not help you.

What will supplemental oxygen do for me?

If you require oxygen you may notice:

- that it will assist your lungs and heart in working more efficiently
- an improvement in your shortness of breath
- easier everyday activities
- a sense of well being

How much should I use?

Oxygen is a prescribed therapy. Increasing the flow rate can be dangerous, as it may result in too high an oxygen intake, which may increase the level of carbon dioxide (a waste product which the lungs normally remove). Therefore, oxygen flow rates should not be changed until your health care professional changes the prescription.

Oxygen is a drug and should be used according to your prescription. You may have different flow rates for sleep, rest and exertion.

Supplemental Oxygen

I have been prescribed oxygen



The air that we breathe is a mixture of gases. This mixture that has approximately 21% oxygen. Normally, this supplies enough oxygen to support the body's needs. However, for some people with lung disease, additional oxygen is prescribed to meet the body's demands.

Your oxygen prescription will tell you:

1. The flow rate or oxygen concentration (e.g. L/min, 28% FiO₂)
2. The delivery system (e.g. nasal prongs, oxymizer, venturi/venti-mask)
3. The activity (rest, exertion, sleep)

Oxygen does not burn and it will never explode, but it does support combustion. All materials will burn faster in an oxygen-enriched atmosphere.

When using supplemental oxygen:

- Keep matches, lighters, cigarettes, candles, gas stoves, etc., away from areas where oxygen is used or stored. Stay at least 5 feet (2 metres) away from anyone who is smoking or from an open flame.
- Do not shave with an electric shaver while you are using oxygen.
- Store oxygen in a cool, well-ventilated spot away from any electric appliances.