

Living Well with COPD: Oxygen therapy for better breathing

We recommend that you start oxygen therapy. Oxygen therapy will increase the amount of oxygen that flows into your lungs and bloodstream, helping you breathe better and be more active.

How do I get started?

When you have oxygen delivered to your home, the representative from the oxygen supplier will review the things you need to know, including how to use your equipment, safety tips, taking care of your tubing, and replacing your filter.

Can I still do my normal activities while I'm on oxygen?

Yes! The good news is that oxygen systems are portable. You can use them as you go about your daily life. In fact, because you will have less shortness of breath and more energy, you might find that, while using your oxygen, you can do more of the activities that you enjoy.

Do I need to use my oxygen all the time?

Each person's need for supplemental oxygen is different. Your own need for oxygen will depend on your overall health and the results of tests we use to measure the oxygen levels in your blood.

Your health care team will find the best use of home oxygen for you, including while you're being active during day, when you're at rest, and when you're sleeping.

Are there any risks to consider?

Usually there are no health risks to being on oxygen. But oxygen is a fire hazard, so it is important to follow safety rules. Do not use oxygen around lit cigarettes, open flames (such as candles or a fireplace), or anything that can easily catch fire. Being around any kind of flame can increase the danger of fires and explosions.

People using oxygen should not smoke or be around smokers.

If you smoke, or any one who cares for or lives with you smokes, it's very important to quit BEFORE bringing oxygen into your home. **For help quitting tobacco, contact *Quit for Life* at 1-800-462-5327**

Other tips for staying safe around home oxygen:

- ☐ Keep oxygen canisters at least 5 feet away from any heat source
- ☐ Store oxygen canisters in an upright position in an approved oxygen storage cart
- ☐ Store your oxygen in a well-ventilated area away from the sun and never drape anything over your oxygen supply source
- ☐ Turn the supply valve to the OFF position when you're not using your oxygen
- ☐ Don't use anything around your oxygen that can cause a spark, such as electric heaters, electric blankets, electric razors, and hair dryers
- ☐ Don't use lotions, ointments, or creams that contain petroleum (such as Vaseline)

- ❑ Install smoke detectors in your home and replace batteries regularly
- ❑ Tell your power company that you're dependent on home oxygen and ask what steps you need to take if there's a power outage
- ❑ Make sure you don't trip over your oxygen tubing by putting brightly-colored tape every foot or so along the tubing
- ❑ If you use an assistive device for walking, such as a walker or can, loop the tubing around your finger to keep it away from your feet
- ❑ When moving from standing to sitting, put the tube directly in front of you so you can see it easily to make sure it doesn't get tangled on anything

When to follow-up with your health care team

Make an appointment to follow up with us after starting your oxygen therapy. Be sure to bring your oxygen with you when you come in for your appointment.

Questions about your oxygen equipment?

It is the responsibility of the oxygen supplier to make sure you understand exactly how to use each type of oxygen equipment you have, and how to trouble-shoot if you have any problems.

Following are important questions to ask the supplier when you receive your oxygen equipment. Ask these questions for each type of oxygen unit you'll be using, for example your home stationary device, your portable device, and your portable concentrator.

As you go through these steps for each piece of your equipment, ask the oxygen technician to show you and then do it yourself while they watch.

- ❑ How do I turn it on?
- ❑ How do I adjust the liter flow?

For use with a CPAP machine:

- ❑ Do I have the right kind of adaptor to attach my oxygen?
- ❑ How do I use the adapter?

For more information about oxygen therapy

Visit the Health and Well Resources section of www.kp.org/wa. Under Conditions, diseases and symptoms, click on Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)