

## Receiving oxygen therapy when you are discharged from hospital

### Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at [ndht.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ndht.pals@nhs.net).

### What is oxygen therapy?

Oxygen therapy increases the amount of oxygen in the lungs and the bloodstream. A person with a lung disease may need oxygen therapy if they have low oxygen levels in their blood.

During an exacerbation (flare-up) of your Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), the oxygen levels in your blood may be **temporarily lowered**. Your oxygen level should improve over the next 4 to 8 weeks as you recover from your COPD exacerbation. Please note that oxygen therapy will be discontinued once you have recovered from this episode and your blood oxygen levels return to normal.

There are two types of oxygen therapy that you may be prescribed upon your discharge from hospital. These will be delivered by the home oxygen supplier called Air Liquide.

### Long-term oxygen therapy

If the level of oxygen in your blood falls below set criteria when you are resting, you might need to use an oxygen machine for a minimum of 15 hours each day. The majority of this is used during the evening and overnight. The machine is called an oxygen concentrator, producing a continuous supply of oxygen. It runs off electricity, so you will be provided with a large back-up cylinder in case of a power failure. The oxygen tubing from the machine is measured and cut to allow you to move around your home safely without the risk of a trip hazard.

You will be asked if your property has working smoke alarms. If you do not, the service is able to refer you to the Devon fire safety team, who will install smoke detectors free of charge.

Smoking cigarettes is extremely dangerous to your household and neighbouring homes if you are on oxygen therapy. We will ask you not to smoke cigarettes or e-cigarettes if you are to have oxygen at home. You will be expected to sign a declaration form to confirm that you have discussed the risks of smoking near oxygen and will not smoke yourself, nor allow anyone else to smoke in your home where oxygen is being used. Please talk to us regarding smoking cessation support.

Please do not use any paraffin-based products around your nasal passages. Ask your nurse or doctor for an alternative water-based lubricant if needed.

## **Ambulatory oxygen**

If your oxygen levels drop when you are active, you may require ambulatory (portable) oxygen. You will be asked to attend a clinic appointment where you will undertake a formal assessment. This appointment will be when you have fully recovered from this present exacerbation, in approximately 6 to 8 weeks.

## **Follow-up assessment**

You will be reviewed by the oxygen assessment nurse between 6 to 8 weeks after your discharge from hospital.

At this appointment the nurse will reassess your blood oxygen levels. If the oxygen levels have returned to within normal ranges, the oxygen therapy will be discontinued. The oxygen supplier will arrange with you when it is convenient to remove all of the oxygen equipment.

Should your oxygen levels show you still require oxygen therapy, any adjustments to your flow rates may be made and a planned follow-up date will be set. You will then be under regular review with the oxygen assessment service.

## **How will I feel afterwards?**

You may find that you still feel breathless in spite of having blood oxygen levels which have returned to normal. It is important to understand that breathlessness is not necessarily caused by low oxygen levels. Oxygen therapy is only used if the oxygen levels in your blood are consistently low. It is not a treatment for breathlessness. Oxygen therapy is a medication and should only be given if your blood oxygen levels indicate it is required.

## **Other treatment options**

There are other treatment options which are far more effective than oxygen therapy, which may help to relieve the feeling of breathlessness. These include:

- Fan therapy
- Pulmonary rehabilitation course
- Breathing control techniques
- Relaxation CDs

The nurses can provide you with further details and advice.

## **Further information**

Our Oxygen Assessment Service team currently offers service to our patients on Monday to Friday.

The team consists of two respiratory clinical nurse specialists, Lesley Parsons and Linda Jordan, who work closely with the respiratory consultant team.

We will be happy to answer any questions you may have. For more information, please contact us on **01271 337811**.

### **Other useful resources**

British Lung Foundation: [www.blf.org.uk](http://www.blf.org.uk)

### **PALS**

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email [ndht.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ndht.pals@nhs.net). You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

### **Have your say**

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at [www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk).

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