

Patient Safety ALERT: Placement of pulse oximeter probes - adults

Oxygen saturation readings are a key component of the National Early Warning Score (NEWS2).

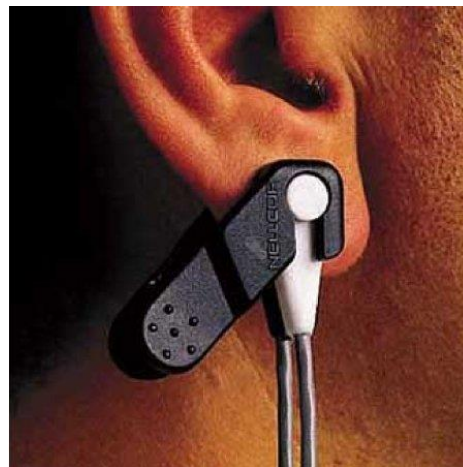
There is a risk of inaccurate oxygen saturation readings that could be 50% lower or 30% higher if an oximeter probe intended for a finger is attached to an ear (or vice versa).

Adult oximeter probes can be attached to either an ear or a finger, but are not interchangeable.

The implication of inaccurate readings (as part of NEWS2) can be false reassurance about a patient's condition and failure to identify a deteriorating patient, or may result in an inappropriate intervention when a patient believed to be deteriorating is in fact stable or improving.

For adult patients please ensure:

- Finger probes for adults are not attached to ears.
- Ear probes for adults are not attached to fingers.
- Staff are trained and in date with clinical competencies for use of pulse oximeter probes.



If a reading cannot be taken from an adult using a finger probe, an ear probe on an ear should be used. Adult ear probes can be purchased via web basket:

- Medtronic SpO2 ear probe: FDC597LC
- Medtronic SpO2 ear clip: FDC599LC

Supporting information concerning this alert is provided in the NHS Improvement Patient Safety Alert [NHS/PSA/W/2018/009](https://www.nhs.uk/psa/w/2018/009)

FOR URGENT ACTION BY MANAGERS

- Ensure that ALL STAFF who use pulse oximeter probes are informed of the patient safety alert
- Further information can be provided by the Patient Safety Team on 01271 349 595, ext 3382