



**Royal Berkshire**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Going home from hospital with oxygen

Information for patients,  
relatives and carers

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This leaflet aims to provide information to patients and their relatives/carers with regard to being discharged from hospital with an oxygen prescription.

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### What is oxygen?

We breathe in oxygen to nourish the body's cells and breathe out carbon dioxide, the body's waste product.

When patients have been unwell with their breathing it can sometimes take a period of time for their body's oxygen level to return to normal.

Oxygen levels can be easily monitored using a 'pulse oximeter' - a small, painless probe that fits on to the end of the finger. In some patients if the oxygen levels are low it may be necessary to provide supplemental oxygen for them to use at home during the recovery phase.

Oxygen is not the best treatment for breathlessness and other treatment options such as inhalers/nebulisers are used to treat this symptom.

### How long will I need oxygen for?

Unless we have told you otherwise we would expect you to gradually get better after leaving hospital. The oxygen supply may just be temporary while you are recovering, and once your oxygen levels have returned to normal it will be removed. In some patients with chronic lung disease, supplemental oxygen may be considered for longer periods of time if your oxygen levels remain low once you are well.

### Oxygen at home can be provided via one of two devices:

Oxygen concentrator: This machine is about the size of a bedside table and concentrates oxygen from air in the room. It plugs into the mains electricity and uses around 350 watts of power (about the same as four 100w light bulbs). An oxygen concentrator will be provided if oxygen is

needed for long periods of time. The cost of the electricity used is reimbursed by the oxygen equipment provider.

Oxygen cylinders: These are large static cylinders for patients to use for short periods (i.e. 5-10mins) throughout the day after they have exerted themselves or for relief of breathlessness when alternatives such as inhalers, control of breathing exercises and use of a fan have not helped.

It is important that you do not alter the oxygen flow rate or increase the duration of use beyond what is prescribed, as this can be dangerous. If you feel that your medical condition is worsening please seek help from your GP or the community team.

## Follow-up

Following discharge from hospital with oxygen, your oxygen needs will be re-assessed. This will normally be carried out by the 'Oxygen Assessment Service' at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. An outpatient appointment will be sent to you. In some circumstances you may be contacted by telephone. This decision will be made by the respiratory nurse at the Royal Berkshire Hospital before you go home.

## Oxygen and smoking

**If you smoke then oxygen therapy may not be provided as this is a safety hazard. Other people must also refrain from smoking in the house, in the vicinity of the machine or any oxygen outlet. Keep the oxygen away from sources of heat and ignition, and clear from any covers and curtains. Tubing and cylinders may present tripping hazards - please take care.**

**Electronic cigarettes should not be used while wearing the oxygen. Batteries of electronic cigarettes should not be charged in the vicinity of any source of oxygen.**

Your home oxygen supply:

**Device:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Flow rate:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Hours per day:** \_\_\_\_\_

If you develop headaches, new confusion or increased daytime sleepiness, contact the Oxygen Assessment Service on 0118 322 7159 Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm.

If we have not responded within 4 hours please contact your GP or out of hours GP.

Follow up planned: \_\_\_\_\_

Respiratory Clinical Nurse Specialist: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Oxygen Assessment Nurse: \_\_\_\_\_

Your oxygen company is:

**Dolby Vivisol**

They can be contacted on:

**0800 917 9840 (24 hour line)**

Please do not hesitate to contact them if you have any problems or queries regarding your oxygen.

Alternatively, you may contact the Oxygen Assessment Service on the number below or your own GP.

Department of Respiratory Medicine

Level 2, South Block. Royal Berkshire Hospital

Telephone: 0118 322 7159 Mon Fri 8.00am – 4.00pm

Clinical Admin Team (CAT 11)

Telephone: 0118 322 6676 Mon-Fri 8.00am – 4.00pm

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

Department of Respiratory Medicine, July 2004

Reviewed: October 2017

Review due: October 2019