

Non-Invasive Ventilation (NIV)

This leaflet explains the basics of your home Non-Invasive Ventilator (NIV) issued by the Respiratory Medicine Outpatient Department.

How the lungs work

The principal function of the lungs is to get oxygen into the body and to remove carbon dioxide. When the lungs start to fail, oxygen levels drop and carbon dioxide levels can rise – this is often called respiratory failure.

What is NIV?

The ventilator is a machine that uses air pressure to assist the act of breathing performed by the lungs. NIV consists of the ventilator unit itself, some tubing and a mask that you wear to allow the air pressure to enter the respiratory system.

Why use NIV?

NIV is issued when respiratory failure is diagnosed and your medical team believe that you would benefit from your breathing being supported by a ventilator.

What does it feel like?

Under normal circumstances, the lungs work automatically. When NIV is used to support them, it can initially feel strange and can take some time to get used to the sensation of the ventilator. The medical team will discuss with you the settings that suit you best. It is very important not to adjust the settings yourself. Most people do not need extra oxygen with their machine, but if you are prescribed oxygen as well, never increase the flow rate as this can make you ill. You may be given an oxygen alert card to warn emergency staff that high flow oxygen would make you very ill.

When do I use NIV?

NIV is usually used at night but sometimes it can be also used whilst awake. It may be recommended at other times, e.g. if you have a nap in the afternoon.

Your mask

NIV works best with a well-fitting mask. We have a range of masks available to use.

Cleaning and maintenance

The air filters are replaced depending on the type of machine and amount of use.

Your mask should be washed with a non-perfumed soap i.e simple soap or similar and warm water. A mask will usually last 12 months. We can supply or order other parts as required.

Things to look out for

Keep an eye on the skin around your face; if a sore develops, contact the team for advice. Large leaks around the mask can make NIV less effective and uncomfortable to use. If you have persistent leaks, contact the team for advice.

Always switch your machine off on the unit – unplugging when in use will set off the alarm. If you live in an area with repeated power interruptions you may need an external battery option.

Travel – you will need to take your machine with you on holiday and may need to use it on long haul flights while you sleep. We will give you a letter to explain its use for your airline. Ask if you need advice.

What if my machine stops working?

1. If your machine stops functioning and you are using it at night only please contact us urgently and we will try to offer a replacement or repair within 1-2 working days. We do not currently offer a 24 hour service.
2. If your machine stops functioning and you need it most of the time or if you develop headaches, new confusion or drowsiness when you are unable to use it, contact Respiratory Medicine Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm. If you have not been rung back within 2 hours or you feel it is an emergency come to the Accident and Emergency Department.

If you are admitted overnight to hospital for any reason or have an outpatient appointment in the Department of Respiratory Medicine **ALWAYS BRING YOUR MACHINE WITH YOU.** Ask the ward staff to contact Respiratory Medicine if you are admitted under other teams.

Contact details

Please contact us by telephone if your machine has a fault or you think your NIV settings need to be reviewed in clinic.

Clinical Admin Team 11 (Respiratory Medicine)

Monday-Friday, 8am-4pm

Tel: **0118 322 6676**

email: rbbh.CAT11@nhs.net

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

Respiratory Medicine, Level 2, South Block

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