
Introduction

This leaflet has been designed to give you information about ambulatory oxygen therapy, and answers some of the questions that you or those who care for you may have. It is not meant to replace the discussion between you and your medical team but aims to help you understand more about what is discussed. If you have any questions about the information below, please contact us.

Ambulatory oxygen therapy

Ambulatory oxygen is a therapy designed to help those whose oxygen level in their blood drops when they are active. Its aim is to maintain an adequate blood oxygen level which in turn could help keep you mobile, allowing you to do things that you might otherwise feel too breathless or tired to do.

In some lung diseases the lungs do not keep up with the increased demands of the body during movement or exercise. This will result in your blood oxygen level decreasing. This may or may not be accompanied by breathlessness. Using this type of oxygen therapy may mean that you are more comfortable carrying out day to day activities and going out and about.

The equipment used is usually either a portable oxygen concentrator (POC) that you carry over your shoulder or in a trolley,

or a cylinder that you carry in a backpack. It can be used anytime you are active, whether it be inside or outside of the house. However, you must not use it for more than a few minutes whilst you are sat still or when you are sleeping.

You must be assessed to determine whether or not you are suitable to have ambulatory oxygen.

Assessing you for ambulatory oxygen

If your doctor thinks you may be suitable for ambulatory oxygen therapy then we will arrange to see you for an assessment.

We will ask you a range of questions in regards to your home, social life and level of mobility. This will allow us to gain an understanding of where and how oxygen might be beneficial. We will then ask you to perform a six minute walk test. This involves walking along a flat corridor for six minutes at your own comfortable pace whilst wearing a probe on your finger to measure your blood oxygen level.

The results of this test along with the information you have given us, will tell us whether or not you are suitable for ambulatory oxygen. If you are, then we will talk to you about the type of oxygen equipment that is best suited to you and

your lifestyle. We will then ask you to carry out another walk test whilst using the oxygen. This allows us to determine the suitability of the equipment and how much oxygen you would need from it.

Oxygen is a flammable gas and therefore we have to be very cautious in those that smoke, or are exposed to smokers in their home or social environments. A risk assessment will be carried out to ensure your home environment is safe for oxygen.

Starting ambulatory oxygen therapy

If your walk tests show that ambulatory oxygen may help, we will discuss with you what it involves and whether you would like to trial it. If you decide to start it, we will send off a prescription to your local oxygen supplier. They will bring you the equipment within a few days and show you how to use it. We will arrange to see you around six weeks later to see whether it is helping and whether we need to make any changes to your oxygen flow rate. If you wish to continue using it, we will see you for monitoring purposes on an annual basis. If you decide that this is not the therapy for you then we will ask for it to be removed.

Some people decide that this is not a therapy they want to pursue, others are keen to start it. It may be useful to discuss

the possibility with family or those you live with, or to bring someone to the appointment with you.

It is important to understand that you do not have to have it. You must want to use it for it to work for you. Oxygen equipment can be very expensive for the NHS so if you decide you do not want it, we ask that you let us know so that we can arrange its removal from your home.

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net
Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team: imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

Respiratory physiotherapy

Ambulatory oxygen therapy

Information for patients, relatives and carers