

If you have any questions, ask your care team.

Oxygen Therapy

We all need oxygen to survive. People with lung disease or other conditions may not have enough oxygen in their blood. Low levels of oxygen can cause serious problems. Your physician may prescribe oxygen as a medication to increase the amount of oxygen in your blood. The oxygen you get will be more concentrated (higher dose) than the oxygen in the air.

Oxygen therapy can help you keep an active lifestyle and reduce stress on other organs.

Testing

Your care team will examine you in the clinic. They will measure how your body uses oxygen with these tests.

Oxygen saturation level

The care team will check your oxygen saturation level with a pulse oximeter. A pulse oximeter is a small, electronic device you can put on your finger to measure how much oxygen is in your blood (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Pulse oximeter



6-minute walk test

The care team will ask you to walk up and down the hallway. The object of this test is to walk as far as possible in 6 minutes. You can stop, rest or slow down if you need to. But you should try to walk again as soon as possible. The care team will check your oxygen saturation level before and after the test. If it drops below 88%, you will need a prescription for oxygen therapy. Your physician will also order an oxygen titration test.

Oxygen titration test

This test will show how much oxygen therapy you need. You will wear a pulse oximeter and will breathe oxygen through a nasal cannula. You will walk up and down the hallway at a normal pace. The care team will adjust the oxygen flow to keep your oxygen levels above 88%. Once your oxygen saturation level stays above 88% constantly, the care team will use this oxygen liter flow amount for your prescription.

Oxygen prescription

Your physician will prescribe oxygen for you, if you need it, based on your test results. The prescription will tell you:

- How much oxygen you need (flow rate or setting)
- When and how often you should use the oxygen (during activity, at night or all the time)
- Type of oxygen equipment you will use

Oxygen equipment

Your care team will work with your insurance and a durable medical equipment (DME) company to get you the equipment.

A DME company provides medical supplies and equipment, including oxygen therapy devices, that are medically prescribed for you. Your care team works with a DME company that follows Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services guidelines. The choice of the DME company is based on a number of factors including your home zip code, your insurance, and your specific DME needs. The DME company should contact you within 1 to 2 weeks to schedule the drop-off and set-up of your oxygen equipment. They will show you how to use and care for the equipment when they bring it to your home. They will work with you if there are issues or questions about your supplies and equipment. It is important to know the name of your DME company and how to contact them.