

## Home Oxygen Therapy

Oxygen is a medical gas ordered for your child by the doctor. The amount of oxygen your child needs is determined by pulse oximetry. A lighted probe is attached to your child's finger or toe to measure oxygen content. This is usually done at the hospital or your doctor's office. The flow of oxygen that your child receives is measured in liters per minute (*lpm*).

When your child receives oxygen therapy at home it is important that you are aware of the signs and symptoms that can occur when the body's oxygen level is low. Prior to discharge from the hospital, observe how your child looks with a good oxygen level. This is a "normal level baseline" from which you can compare if there are concerns at home.

### Signs of low oxygen levels (hypoxia):

- Increased heart rate
- Increased breathing rate
- Increased irritability not easily resolved by normal measures such as diaper change, feeding, holding
- Increased work of breathing (pulling in at the neck, ribs or stomach; use of stomach muscles to breath out)
- Changes in the amount or frequency of feedings, or loss of appetite
- Changes in color: pale spells, duskiness or blueness in and around the lips, gums, tongue and nail beds

You may have seen some of these signs in your child while in the hospital. If you are not sure what to look for, ask your doctor, nurse or respiratory therapist.

### Things that can worsen your child's condition:

- Upper respiratory infection such as a cold
- Lower respiratory infection such bronchiolitis or pneumonia
- Going to higher altitude

If some of the symptoms listed above appear, check to make sure that all connections are secure, there are no knots or kinks in the tubing, and that oxygen is flowing. If the oxygen seems to be flowing correctly, slowly increase the flow of oxygen until the symptoms improve and call your doctor.

Before going to a higher altitude such as the mountains, contact your doctor for instructions on adjusting the oxygen flow rate. With guidance from your doctor and close observation by you, your child may be able to handle higher altitudes.

## Precautions

Oxygen will increase the burning rate of a material that is already on fire, such as clothing. For example, a spark that lands on clothing will normally only smolder and cause a small burn hole, but with oxygen present the clothing may ignite. **Follow these precautions:**

- Avoid toys with friction motors and ones that emit sparks.
- If you have a wood stove or fireplace, be sure that the fire box is enclosed or a screen is in use.
- Keep the oxygen source and your child at least 4 to 6 feet away from any heat source (this includes stoves, ovens, and space heaters).
- If possible, keep the child out of the kitchen when cooking on the stove, especially frying; if the child must be in the kitchen maintain the 4 to 6 feet distance from the stove.
- Do not use any oil, grease or petroleum-based products on any of your equipment or near the child. These products will burn readily in the presence of oxygen.
- Avoid any petroleum based lotions or creams (like Vaseline or Vicks) in the face or upper chest. Check the listing on products before purchasing. Some recommended non-petroleum based products include:
  - Nasal Moist®
  - Burt's Bees lip balm and moisturizers (available in TCH Gift shop, Wild Oats and Vitamin Cottage or natural products stores.)
  - Cann-Ease nasal moisturizer (customer service at 1-800-838-8367)
  - Aloe Vera based products
  - Any water-based product without additional petroleum based ingredient
- **Do not smoke in the house and no smoking in the car when your child is present. Sparks from cigarettes are impossible to control.**

Your child should never be exposed to second hand smoke.

## Oxygen dose

Your child's doctor has ordered an oxygen liter flow of \_\_\_\_\_ per minute to be given \_\_\_\_\_.

**CALL YOUR OXYGEN COMPANY WHEN YOU ARRIVE HOME**

Oxygen supplier \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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