



## **"Wear Your Oxygen and Stay Active" To Live Longer**

COPD has been diagnosed in approximately 16 million Americans. Many experts believe the actual number may be much higher. Although there are many treatments for COPD, only two have been shown to actually improve survival- oxygen and activity.

Two studies, one in Great Britain and one in the US, were done in the late 1960's to study the effects of oxygen on survival. Prior to these studies most physicians believed oxygen was bad for COPD patients and shouldn't be used for treatment. Researchers including Dr. Thomas Petty disagreed and thought that treating COPD patients that had a low blood oxygen level would be beneficial. Both studies demonstrated the same results; using oxygen did indeed improve survival.

Patients that wore their oxygen the most had the best survival over 5 years. Those who wore it only part of the time had decreased survival, and those who didn't wear it at all had the poorest survival. Patients in these studies all had a low oxygen level all of the time, even at rest.



Recently, Dr. Petty re-examined this data and compared not only the effect of wearing oxygen, but also looked at the effect of staying active. Dr. Petty found that those who were most active and wore their oxygen more lived the longest. Those who were less active and wore their oxygen less lived the shortest time on average. The data confirmed what Dr. Petty believed to be true, not only did wearing the oxygen improve survival, but remaining active did as well.

After 3½ years, 78% of patients who used their oxygen the most and were most active were surviving compared with only 26% of those that did not use oxygen as much or stay as active.

A secondary benefit of using oxygen and staying active was noted on hospitalization days. Patients who used their oxygen more and stayed active averaged only 1.3 days of hospitalization per year. Those that used their oxygen less and were less active averaged 10.1 days of hospitalization per year. Low oxygen, low activity patients spent 7½ times more days per year in the hospital!

Since staying active and using your oxygen are so important, here are ways you can incorporate this into your daily life:

1. **Wear your oxygen as the doctor ordered it.** If ordered for 24 hours per day, then keep it on all of the time. If ordered during sleep or activity, then wear it during those times. Your doctor performed specific testing to determine exactly when you should use your oxygen.
2. **Never stop or decrease your oxygen use without being retested.** Many patients believe that if they start feeling better, they can stop using the oxygen. A change in symptoms alone is not enough to change oxygen use. Oxygen use should only be changed when testing shows that your oxygen level is adequate at rest, during activity, and during sleep.
3. **Choose a portable oxygen system that allows you to stay active.** Talk with your oxygen supplier about which options are available and the portable system that is best for you.
4. **Find ways to stay active.** If you have stopped, start slowly and increase your activity level gradually over a period of time. Before increasing your activity, always talk with your doctor first.
5. **Make a time for activity each day.** To improve the conditioning of your heart, you should work toward a moderately vigorous activity that lasts at least 20-30 minutes for 3 or more days per week.
6. **Pick an activity that you enjoy and that fits into your lifestyle-** different strokes for different folks. Some enjoy walking outside, others may prefer riding a stationary bike in their home, while others may prefer a brisk stroll through the local mall.
7. **Find creative ways to perform your favorite activities while using oxygen.** Some people feel that once they go on oxygen they have to give up their hobbies. This isn't true. Many patients continue gardening, shopping, fishing, hunting, golfing, traveling, or even dancing while on oxygen.
8. **Join a pulmonary rehabilitation program.** Most hospitals have an exercise program specifically for people with heart and/or lung problems. Ask your doctor if one is available in your area.



If you have specific questions about using your oxygen or increasing your activity, talk to your doctor or call our respiratory clinician.