



## Why Am I Using Oxygen?

**Why am I using oxygen?** This is a question that everyone using oxygen has, but very few probably ever get a satisfactory answer. In order to answer that question let's break it down into simpler terms.

**What is oxygen?** Oxygen is a part of the air that we breathe into our lungs every time we take a breath. Our body uses the oxygen to create the energy it needs to carry on all of the processes essential to living such as walking, thinking, breathing, and laughing. Without oxygen the body would shut down in less than 10 minutes.

**Why do I need extra oxygen?** Due to some heart and lung conditions, not enough oxygen is able to get into the blood to supply the body with the oxygen it needs. Once your condition has been stabilized, the only way to correct a low oxygen level is to use supplemental oxygen.

**Won't I become addicted to it?** This is a common myth that many people using oxygen have heard, sometimes even from a medical professional. The air we breathe is 21% oxygen. Most people using oxygen are only receiving a little higher percentage (about 28% at 2 l/m); just enough to bring your blood oxygen back to an adequate level. There is no clinical evidence that using oxygen is physically addicting or that using oxygen on a part-time basis will lead to full time use. If anything, using the oxygen will help to stabilize your condition which may prevent increased use later.

**How do you know I need the oxygen?** Your blood has been tested and shown to be low on oxygen. This has been done in one of two ways. You may have had a sample of blood taken from your artery known as an arterial blood gas (ABG), or you may have been tested with a small probe on your finger or ear, called oximetry. Your oxygen may be measured at rest, during activity, or during sleep. If your level is low during any of these times, you should be using your oxygen at those times.

**Can't I tell if my oxygen is low?** Not necessarily, some of the symptoms of low oxygen can be shortness of breath, fast heart rate, changes in the color of lips and fingernails, but some people will have low oxygen level without experiencing any of these symptoms. Others may experience these symptoms without being low on oxygen. The only way to tell for sure is the testing mentioned above.

**What are the benefits of using the oxygen?** Multiple studies have shown that using oxygen as prescribed leads to a longer life and improved quality of life. Some people feel dramatically different after they start using the oxygen. Less shortness of breath, increased stamina, and better tolerance of activity, more restful sleep, improved

memory, and clearer thinking are some of the immediate improvements experienced. Others may see little or no change in the way they feel. But whether you feel differently or not, using the oxygen is necessary and will result in the long-term benefits.

**When should I use it?** Oxygen is not stored well by the body. In fact, once you quit using it, your blood levels will return to previous levels within minutes. For this reason, it is essential for you to use the oxygen at the times your level has been shown to be low. If you are low during activity you should wear it during activity. If you are low during sleep, wear it while you sleep. If you are low at rest, you should wear your oxygen continuously.

**What if I don't use it?** Not using the oxygen as your doctor has prescribed will result in your blood oxygen level remaining low. This causes your entire body to be stressed, especially your heart. A low oxygen level increases the pressure inside your heart and with time can cause your heart to enlarge and work less efficiently, a condition known as cor pulmonale. As stated above, studies have shown that patients **not** using their oxygen as needed do not live as long and have a decreased quality of life.

**Will I ever be able to quit using it?** Some people with a reversible condition such as pneumonia will get better and no longer need to use oxygen. Conditions such as congestive heart failure, emphysema, and chronic bronchitis are primarily irreversible and long-term use is often necessary. Oxygen should **never** be discontinued without testing showing that your blood oxygen level is adequate at rest, during sleep, and during activity. An important part of adapting to the use of oxygen is keeping a positive attitude. Don't dwell on the negative aspects but look at all the benefits mentioned above. In many ways it's like getting your first pair of glasses. Sure they feel funny and make you look different, but now you can see to read and drive.

If you have any more questions, always feel free to contact us and we will be happy to discuss it with you.

***STUDIES SHOW THAT USING OXYGEN AS PRESCRIBED  
WILL RESULT IN LONGER LIFE AND INCREASED  
QUALITY OF LIFE.***