

# Oxygen Therapy for Cluster Headaches

## Respiratory Department

**Patient Information Leaflet**



## What is Oxygen?

Oxygen therapy is normally used to help improve low blood oxygen levels, however a cluster headache is the only indication for oxygen therapy in the absence of low blood oxygen levels.

It is a prescribed medication. The amount you have been prescribed has been carefully assessed and is individual to you.

High flow short-burst oxygen has been shown to be effective at aborting attacks for some patients with cluster headache.

## How to use your Oxygen Therapy for Cluster Headaches

The oxygen company will supply you with a supply of static cylinders and/or ambulatory cylinders as appropriate.

You should use your oxygen at \_\_\_\_\_ Litres/minute (L/min).

You should use the \_\_\_\_\_ (Device)

Oxygen should be applied at the first sign of a cluster headache.

If successful, an individual attack should be aborted within 15-20 minutes. If the attack is successfully aborted, you should stay on the oxygen for 5-10 minutes after the pain has gone to “mop up” the attack and prevent possible rebound.

If the attack is not aborted within 20 minutes you are unlikely to get relief for that attack. The oxygen should therefore be stopped for this attack and you should turn off the oxygen. This does not mean that further attacks will not respond to oxygen and it is worth trying oxygen again at the start of the next attack.

You may find it helpful to keep a diary of attacks and how well they respond to oxygen.

It is important that you do not change the flow rate of your oxygen unless advised. Changing the flow rate without a proper assessment can be dangerous. This is because Oxygen is a prescribed medication and should be treated like any other prescribed medication you may take. Never let anyone else use your oxygen, as it may cause serious harm.

## Safety Precautions

- Never smoke or let anyone else smoke near you when using the oxygen equipment. This includes electronic cigarettes.
- Never charge an electronic cigarette or similar device close to you when using your oxygen equipment or near the equipment itself.
- Never use or store oxygen equipment within 3 metres of open fires or naked flames such as matches, lighters, gas cookers or candles.
- Never use or store oxygen equipment within 1.5 metres of other heat sources such as electrical fires, gas heaters, boilers, radiator or white goods.
- Never use petroleum, oil or paraffin based products (for example Vaseline) when using your oxygen. It is highly flammable and it can react with the oxygen causing irritation or burns to the skin. Use only water soluble products (e.g. KY Jelly).

Further information is located in the Home Oxygen supplier's handbook. This handbook is provided when the oxygen supply is initially installed.

## When to contact the Home Oxygen Team

- If you have any questions following your recent review.
- If you require advice and support regarding oxygen equipment.
- If you have been suffering with occasional nasal blood spotting, scabbing and/or nasal dryness, we may consider an alternative device to provide Oxygen, prescribe a topical ointment to help lubricate the nasal mucosa or complete a referral to the Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) specialist for advice.
- If you have active nasal bleeding which has not stopped within 20 minutes, it is advisable to seek urgent medical attention via your GP or the nearest accident and emergency department.

## How to contact the Home Oxygen Team

- If you have any enquiries, concerns or require further information, the team can be contacted on 01253 956972. The team are available from 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Please note we have an answer machine and messages are checked regularly throughout the day. Please leave your name, contact number and a brief message.
- If your health is deteriorating please seek urgent medical advice either via your GP surgery, community team, call 111 or in a life threatening situation call 999.

## **Useful Contacts:**

### **Stop Smoking Service**

Website: [www.smokefree.nhs.uk](http://www.smokefree.nhs.uk)

Telephone: 0800 022 4332

### **OUCH (Organisation for the Understanding of Cluster Headache)**

Website: [www.ouchuk.org](http://www.ouchuk.org)

## Other sources of information:



**Home Oxygen Team**  
Telephone: **01253 956972**



**Hospital switchboard**  
Telephone: **01253 300000**

## Patient Relations Department

The Patient Relations Department offer impartial advice and deal with any concerns or complaints the Trust receives.



You can contact them via tel: **01253 955589**  
or by email: **bfwh.patientrelations@nhs.net**



Further information is available on our website:  
**www.bfwh.nhs.uk**

If you'd like a large print, audio, Braille or a translated version of this booklet then please call: **01253 955520**



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