



Mercy Health
Care first

Your important health information

Low flow oxygen at home

Your baby will go home on low flow oxygen. This is delivered through small, plastic nasal prongs. This information will help prepare you and your family to take your baby home on oxygen. It is normal to have concerns about this, here you will find useful tips on managing at home. The oxygen company will provide you with information about the equipment.

The staff in the nursery will teach you how to care for your baby on oxygen before you go home.

Frequently asked questions

Why does my baby need low flow oxygen at home?

Your baby has a specific medical condition that requires extra oxygen to maintain their oxygen levels within a normal range. It is important that your baby gets the right level of oxygen as this helps them to grow and develop. Your medical and nursing team can explain why.

How long will my baby be on low flow oxygen?

This may take a few months or sometimes longer. A respiratory physician (usually at the Mercy) will see you regularly and advise you on how to wean and then stop the oxygen.

How will I know if my baby needs more oxygen?

You may see some of the following;

- **Change in colour** – Look at your baby for any changes in skin or lip colour. If they seem pale or blue, check the colour of their gums and tongue. Pink gums are a sign that your baby is receiving enough oxygen. Blue gums may mean that your baby is not receiving enough oxygen or that more oxygen is needed. We will teach you what is normal for your baby.
- **Change in pattern of breathing** – Breathing may be faster and your baby may be making more effort than is normal for them. You may see the ribs drawing in or nasal flaring (nostrils moving in and out). You may notice unusual breathing that sounds like wheezing.
- **Feeding and/or activity** – your baby may not feed as well as normal. The baby may be sleepier or more unsettled than usual.

If you are worried about any of these seek medical help immediately:

- **000**
- **your family doctor**
- **Nurse on Call. Phone: 1300 606 024**

Do I need to have an apnoea monitor?

Some parents prefer to have one however it is not required to hire one.

What will happen if the oxygen tubes come out of their nostrils when we are asleep?

Your baby will wake up and become unsettled if they are not receiving enough oxygen. Some babies will be fine without oxygen for a few minutes. Some babies may be more sensitive and start to cry or fuss. You should put the tubes back to the nostrils as soon as you notice that they have come out.

Can I leave the house with my baby?

Of course you can! It is important you and your baby go out and about.

Remember to check the portable oxygen cylinder level before going out.

Try to stay away from crowded places. Babies who need oxygen are at a higher risk of infections such as cold and flu.

What about infections?

Regular handwashing is important. Avoid close contact with people who have coughs and colds, if possible. Babies who need oxygen are at a higher risk of infections such as cold and flu.

During winter months, we offer a medication in the form of an injection to lower the risk of RSV (respiratory syncytial virus – one of the “common colds”). This is only for babies who are on low flow oxygen.

What if there is a power outage?

You will be given large cylinders of oxygen to use during a power failure. You need to put them in a safe place where they cannot fall over.

Do I need to let anyone know that I have oxygen installed at home?

Yes.

You should tell your:

- local fire service
- home and car insurance providers (in writing).
- real estate agent, if you are renting (in writing).

You should put a sticker on your front door or window saying the house uses oxygen.

Can we go on holidays?

Yes! If you are going on holiday, you will need to plan 4-6 weeks ahead.

The oxygen company can provide oxygen to most places in Australia and will let you know of any costs. If you are flying, call the airline to ask what medical forms they need before flying.

What oxygen equipment will we receive?

The Care Manager will arrange for oxygen to be installed at your home.

You will receive:

- a small backpack to carry the portable oxygen cylinder
- 9.1 metre tubing
- a flow meter
- spare washable oxygen cannulas
- **oxygen concentrator (shown below)** – An oxygen concentrator is a machine used to take oxygen from the air. The machine needs to be plugged into a power point. It makes a quiet humming sound when turned on. The oxygen company will talk to you about where to store your concentrator safely



- **oxygen cylinders**
 - 1 large CH oxygen cylinders, in case of power cuts
 - 5 small B oxygen cylinders to use when you go out.



How long will a cylinder last?

Flow rate	CH (large) cylinder	B (small) cylinder
0.1 litres	61.2 hours	21.2 hours
0.2 litres	30.6 hours	10.6 hours
0.5 litres	15.3 hours	5.3 hours

The oxygen company will teach you about:

- safety tips
- reordering oxygen supplies
- cleaning and caring for the equipment.

Cleaning and care of the oxygen equipment

- Check that the nasal prongs are clean regularly throughout the day.
- Clean the nasal prongs with warm, soapy water.
- If the tubing is blocked, replace it.
- Change tapes weekly or earlier if dirty. You can buy tape at your local pharmacy.
- If your baby's skin becomes sore from the tapes, ask your pharmacist for advice.
- If there is anything wrong with your equipment call your oxygen provider.

Prams

Use a sturdy pram with a tray or basket underneath to carry the portable oxygen. You can also carry the oxygen in the backpack provided.

Cars

It is safe for you to carry the oxygen cylinder in the car. The cylinder can be laid down as long as it cannot roll around the car. Try wrapping the cylinder in a towel or strapping it in with a seat belt. Never leave oxygen cylinders in the car as they may become too hot.

Do not smoke around oxygen.

This can be very dangerous.

Practical tips

- Front fastening grow suits, t-shirts which button along the shoulder (so that they can be put on from the bottom up).
- When your baby starts to roll and move around, thread the tubing down inside their clothing and out through the legs.
- Plan ahead before you go out – take spare tapes and tubing just in case.
- Change tapes and tubing after you have bathed your baby as they are often calmer.
- Stick kids 'glow in the dark' stickers at different points of the oxygen tubing so that it can be seen at night. It also makes the tubing on the floor easier to see in the daytime.
- Staff can show you tips on how to prevent the tubing pulling on the baby's nose.

Further Information

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact:

Special Care Nursery

Mercy Hospital for Women
Phone: 03 8458 4730

Werribee Mercy Hospital
Phone: 03 8754 3400

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