

*Leading Health Care  
Into The 21st Century*



*Home Oxygen and  
Respiratory Therapy  
Program*





*Home  
Oxygen  
and*



*Respiratory  
Therapy  
Program*



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# Helping You Breathe Easier



Your VA health care provider has ordered respiratory therapy equipment for your care at home. This can be a brief or long-term need that you and your doctor should talk about.

The VA has a service contract with a certified medical homecare company. With the approval of your home respiratory therapist, Prosthetic Services will arrange for equipment to be delivered and set up in your home.

The technician must do safety checks and explain how to operate and care for your equipment we are providing.

A respiratory therapist will visit within 24 hours of receiving home respiratory therapy services to see if you are doing okay and have any questions or concerns about your respiratory home care.



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# Home Oxygen Therapy

More and more people are using oxygen therapy outside the hospital, letting them lead active, productive lives. You may receive oxygen therapy if you are having trouble breathing. Oxygen can help lessen sleeplessness, headaches and improve mobility and mental ability.

## The Prescription

A physician must write a prescription for oxygen therapy. Your physician will use blood test results that will indicate what your oxygen level is and help determine what your needs are.

Your flow rate:

You may have more than one rate, depending on your activity.

Flow rate for sleeping: \_\_\_\_\_

Flow rate for exercise: \_\_\_\_\_

Flow rate for normal activity: \_\_\_\_\_

**NEVER** change the flow rate without your health care provider's approval.

## The Equipment

There are three common ways of providing oxygen therapy. Oxygen can be delivered to your home in the form of a gas in various-sized cylinders or as a liquid container. The third way to provide oxygen therapy is by using an oxygen concentrator. Each type has different advantages.



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**Compressed Gas** — Oxygen is stored under pressure in a cylinder equipped with a regulator that controls the flow rate. Because the flow of oxygen out of the cylinder is constant, an oxygen-conserving device may be attached to the system to avoid waste. This device releases the gas only when you inhale and cuts it off when you exhale. Oxygen can be provided in a small cylinder that can be carried with you, but the large tanks are heavy and are only suitable for stationary use.

**Liquid Oxygen** — Oxygen is stored as a very cold liquid in a container very similar to a thermos. When released, the liquid converts to a gas and you breathe it in just like the cylinder gas. This storage method takes up less space than the compressed gas cylinder, and you can transfer the liquid to a small, portable container at home. Liquid oxygen is more expensive than the compressed gas, and the container vents when not in use. An oxygen conserving device may be built into the container to conserve the oxygen.

**Oxygen Concentrator** — This is an electrically powered device that separates the oxygen out of the air, concentrates it, and stores it. This system has a number of advantages because it doesn't have to be resupplied and it is not as costly as liquid oxygen. Extra tubing permits the user to move around with minimal difficulty. You must have a cylinder of oxygen as a backup in the event of a power failure. You should advise your electric power company in order to get priority service when there is a power failure.



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## Oxygen Delivery Devices

A nasal cannula is a two-pronged device inserted in the nostrils that is connected to tubing carrying the oxygen. The tubing can rest on the ears.

Transtracheal oxygen therapy requires the permanent insertion of a catheter in the trachea or windpipe. The tubing and transtracheal catheter are held in place by a necklace. Sometimes a humidifier may be installed in-line to add moisture to all of these devices. However, studies show that a humidifier is not necessary for flows equal to or less than 4 lpm.

### Stay safe around oxygen equipment:

Oxygen will **not** explode, but it will make a fire burn hotter.

- ❖ You should never smoke while using oxygen. Warn visitors not to smoke near you when you are using oxygen. Put up “No Smoking” signs in your home where you most often use the oxygen.
- ❖ Stay at least five feet away from gas stoves, candles, lighted fireplaces, or other heat sources.
- ❖ Don't use any flammable products like cleaning fluid, paint thinner, or aerosol sprays while using your oxygen.
- ❖ If you use a portable oxygen system, make sure it is secured to some fixed object or in a stand. Use a seatbelt/safety belt in the car to secure portables.
- ❖ If you use liquid oxygen, make sure the container is kept upright to keep the oxygen from pouring out; the liquid oxygen is so cold it can hurt your skin.
- ❖ Keep a fire extinguisher close by, and let your fire department know that you have oxygen in your home.
- ❖ If you are using an electric concentrator for your oxygen contact your local power company for their power failure policy. Some power companies do keep listings of patients with special needs. You may be directed to notify your community ambulance service or fire department with your special medical needs.



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## Care of Equipment

The home medical equipment and services company that provides the therapy to you at the VA's request is to provide you with instructions on care and use of your equipment. Here are some general guidelines for your cleaning procedures.

- ❖ You should wash your nasal prongs with a liquid soap and rinse well once or twice a week. Replace them every two to four weeks. If you have a cold, change them when your cold symptoms have passed.
- ❖ The humidifier bottle should be washed with soap and warm water and rinsed thoroughly between each refill. Air dry the bottle before filling with distilled water.
- ❖ If you use an oxygen concentrator, unplug the unit, then wipe down the cabinet with a damp cloth and dry it at least weekly. The air filter should be cleaned at least twice a week. Follow your home medical equipment and services company's directions for cleaning the compressor filter.



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## Do's and Don'ts

- ❑ Don't use alcohol or take any other sedating drugs because they will slow your breathing rate.
- ❑ Do make sure you order more oxygen from your dealer in a timely manner.
- ❑ Do use water-based lubricants on your lips or nostrils. Don't use an oil-based product like petroleum jelly.
- ❑ To prevent your cheeks or the skin behind your ears from becoming irritated, tuck some gauze under the tubing. If you have persistent redness under your nose, call your physician.
- ❑ Do find out how long your portable will last so you may go out and not run low.
- ❑ **Call your VA Prosthetic or Respiratory Therapist, five working days ahead, if you plan to travel a distance away from home and need oxygen equipment set-up/delivered.**

## Trouble



Call your primary provider team/physician if you have:

- ◆ constant headaches,
- ◆ blue lips or fingernails,
- ◆ drowsiness, confusion, restlessness, anxiety,
- ◆ slow, shallow, difficult, or irregular breathing,
- ◆ fever, chills, change in sputum color (yellow/green) or other lung infection symptoms.



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# Home Care

Respiratory care at home can contribute to improved quality of life. Your respiratory care practitioner can help you with your treatment, answer questions you may have, provide instructions, and offer suggestions. Here are some tips to ensure that you get the greatest benefit from your respiratory home care.

## Get Involved

Ask questions of your physician, your respiratory care practitioner, your discharge planner, and if necessary, your home medical equipment supplier. Discuss all the options that are available to you regarding your care plan. Provide all the information that is requested about your family and home situation to help your health care provider plan for your care.

## Infection Control

Preventing infections can help you stay as healthy as possible. Hand-washing is the single most important thing to perform on a routine basis. Use soap and lots of warm running water. Work up a good lather and scrub for at least 15 seconds. Rinse well, with your hands pointed down to keep the dirty water from running up your arms. Dry your hands with a clean paper or cloth towel.

Your respiratory care equipment should be cleaned on a regular basis, besides washing with a mild detergent and rinsing carefully.

If you have a home nebulizer it is necessary to sanitize your equipment in a vinegar solution of one part vinegar to three parts distilled water. Rinse carefully and let the parts air dry on a clean cloth or towel.

If you use a metered-dose inhaler and/or a spacer, it should be rinsed with warm water and sanitized as directed by your health care provider.

These are only guidelines, and the specific directions for cleaning and sanitizing your home medical equipment is part of the instructions you get from your home medical equipment company.



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## Lessening the Effects of Sleep Apnea

Breathing problems during sleep can lead to snoring. In more extreme cases, they may cause Excessive Daytime Sleepiness — the inability to stay awake during the day.

The term apnea is used to describe a pause in breathing of 10 or more seconds. Sleep Apnea Syndrome (SAS) is characterized by numerous apneic episodes along with loud snoring during the night and daytime sleeping.

Daytime sleeping is a real problem. Falling asleep at the wheel is a common problem for SAS patients and the cause of numerous accidents.

Believe it or not, it can also lead to memory and concentration problems as well. Anxiety and/or depression are frequent symptoms, as is irritable and aggressive behavior. Physically, a person may experience early morning headaches, sexual dysfunction, chronic tiredness, high blood pressure, swelling of the extremities.

Patient history and a physical exam may indicate the need for a polysomnogram (a formal sleep study) to confirm a diagnosis of SAS. It will record the number and length of each apneic episode and help to find out the severity of the breathing disorder.

Polysomnography requires the placement of sensors to parts of the body. They provide signals that are recorded on a printout. The printout is used to find out how severe the condition is as well as what therapy is most desirable.

### *Symptoms of SAS:*

- **Loud snoring**
- **Pauses in breathing**
- **Thrashing around in bed**
- **Bed-wetting**
- **Sleepwalking**
- **Talking while sleeping**
- **The sensation of insomnia**





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# Patient Rights and Responsibilities

## Respiratory Therapy Home Care

You are eligible for VA respiratory therapy home care. In accepting the VA's assistance with equipment and expenses you agree to the following:

### Your Rights in the VA Respiratory Therapy Home Care Program

You have the right to:

1. Be given information about your rights and responsibilities for receiving VA respiratory therapy home care services.
2. Be given appropriate and professional quality home services without discrimination against race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, handicap or age.
3. Be treated with courtesy and respect by all that provide home care to you under this program.
4. Be free from physical and mental abuse and neglect.
5. Be given proper identification by name and title by everyone who provides oxygen/equipment services to you.
6. Receive a timely response regarding any request for home care services under this program.
7. Be given privacy and confidentiality.
8. Participate in the development of your plan of care and be given an assessment and update periodically.
9. Voice grievances with and/or suggest changes in respiratory therapy home care services and/or staff without being threatened, restrained, or discriminated against.
10. Be given information concerning the consequences of refusing treatment.
11. Refuse treatment within the confines of the law.



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## Your Responsibilities in the VA Respiratory Therapy Home Care Program

Your responsibilities are to:

1. Allow home care personnel in your residence for scheduled appointments/deliveries.
2. Be courteous to personnel providing the home care and keep scheduled appointments with them.
3. Keep your scheduled appointments in the medical clinics for evaluation of the need for continued respiratory therapy home care.
4. Follow your practitioner's and home care respiratory therapist's plan of care and instructions in equipment safety/use.
5. Contact your local VA prosthetics office within 5 working days of your intent to travel out of the area.
6. **Patients on Oxygen \*\*Do Not Smoke** - smoking stops the benefits of oxygen therapy and is a fire hazard. It is therefore not allowed when oxygen therapy is in use.



### VA HEALTHCARE NETWORK UPSTATE NEW YORK

Is committed to assuring quality care  
and a safe environment for patients.

## VA Respiratory Therapy Home Care

Contracted Home Care Contact:

Comp. Name: **Associated Healthcare Systems**

Address: **Amherst, NY**

Phone: **1-888-243-3570 (toll-free)**



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## Getting The Support You Need

### Contact Groups

**American Lung Association:**  
1 (800) LUNG USA  
(1 800 586-4872)

**National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute:**  
(301) 592-8573

**American Sleep Apnea Association**  
1424 K Street NW, Suite 302  
Washington, DC 20005  
(202) 293-3650  
fax: (202) 293-3656





# Reaching Us Is Easy

## VA Medical Centers:

**Albany**  
113 Holland Avenue  
Albany, NY 12208  
(518) 462-3311

**Bath**  
76 Veterans Avenue  
Bath, NY 14810  
(607) 664-4000

**Batavia**  
222 Richmond Avenue  
Batavia, NY 14020  
(716) 343-7500

**Buffalo**  
3495 Bailey Avenue  
Buffalo, NY 14215  
(716) 834-9200

**Canandaigua**  
400 Fort Hill Avenue  
Canandaigua, NY 14424  
(716) 394-2000

**Syracuse**  
800 Irving Avenue  
Syracuse, NY 13210  
(315) 476-7461

## VA Outpatient Clinics:

**Auburn**  
17 Lansing St.  
(315) 255-7011

**Bennington**  
325 North Street  
(802) 447-6913

**Binghamton**  
425 Robinson Street  
(607) 772-9100

**Catskill**  
Greene Medical Arts Bldg.  
159 Jefferson Heights  
(518) 943-7515

**Clifton Park**  
1673 Route 9  
(518) 383-8506

**Dunkirk**  
325 Central Avenue  
(716) 366-2122

**Elizabethtown**  
P.O. Box 277 Park St.  
(518) 873-3295

**Elmira**  
200 Madison Ave.  
(877) 845-3247  
Ext. 44640

**Fonda**  
Camp Mohawk Plaza  
Rt. 30A  
(518) 853-1247

**Glens Falls**  
84 Broad Street  
(518) 798-6066

**Jamestown**  
896 East Second Street  
(716) 661-1447

**Kingston**  
63 Hurley Avenue  
(914) 331-8322

**Lackawanna**  
OLV Family Care Center  
227 Ridge Road  
(716) 822-5944

**Lockport**  
5875 S. Transit Road  
(716) 433-2025

**Malone**  
115 Park Street  
(518) 481-2545

**Massena**  
1 Hospital Drive  
(315) 764-1711

**Mt. Morris**  
2 Livingston County Campus  
(716) 393-7295

**Niagara Falls**  
6560 Niagara Falls Blvd.  
(716) 283-2000

**Olean**  
2221 West State St.  
(716) 375-7555

**Oswego**  
105 County Route 45A  
(315) 343-0925

**Plattsburgh**  
206 Cornelia Street,  
Suite 307  
(518) 566-8563

**Plattsburgh**  
Behavioral Health Office  
210 Cornelia Street,  
Suite 202  
(518) 566-6838

**Rochester**  
465 Westfall Road  
(716) 242-0160

**Rome**  
125 Brookley Road  
(315) 336-3389

**Schenectady**  
1475 Balltown Road  
(518) 346-3334

**Sidney**  
39 Pearl Street West  
(607) 561-2003

**Troy**  
500 Federal Street  
(518) 274-7707

**Wellsville**  
15 Loder Street  
(716) 593-1564

