
Oxygen – Safe Use of Medical Oxygen

We all know that oxygen is essential for our existence, making up around 21% of the air around us, but it is also an essential ingredient in all fires. When medical oxygen is used there is a risk that it may leak into the local atmosphere and increase any existing risk of fire. This helpsheet contains advice and tips on the safe use and storage of the medical oxygen that has been prescribed for you by your doctor.

Once you know that you will be using medical oxygen you should inform your Estate Manager so that a record can be made of the type of equipment that you will be using. We need to be aware of any oxygen cylinders or other equipment on the estate when we carry out the estate fire risk assessments. Your Estate Manager will provide the information to Hanover on Call (or other call centre) so that the emergency services can be advised if there is a fire or other emergency. With your agreement, an appropriate warning symbol may be placed on your flat door to alert the Fire Service that oxygen equipment is located within your flat.

Storage and Use

Always follow the advice and guidance provided by the supplier of your oxygen equipment.

- You should keep the number of oxygen cylinders, stored and used within the flat, to a maximum of two large cylinders (one in use and one as a spare) and a portable one if needed. If only portable cylinders are supplied a maximum of 4 is acceptable.
- You must not leave oxygen cylinders (full or empty) outside the flat, including on a mobility scooter.
- Oxygen cylinders can be stored laid flat to prevent them falling over but must ALWAYS be stood upright before and during use.
- Keep your oxygen equipment in a well ventilated area away from direct sunlight, sources of heat (radiators/storage heaters, etc.) or large quantities of material that will easily burn, such as paper or cardboard.

Fire Safety

Materials burn much faster in oxygen than in air alone and medical oxygen can build up unnoticed on your clothing, hair and bedding therefore:

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- You shouldn't carry or use a portable medical oxygen source under your clothing.
 - You should never smoke or let anyone else smoke near you whilst your oxygen equipment is in use.
 - You should not use oxygen equipment near open fires, candles, gas fires or cookers, etc.

General Safety Tips

- Always ensure that good ventilation is maintained, especially if you are using an oxygen concentrator. (An oxygen concentrator is a machine which filters oxygen from the air in the room and delivers it through plastic tubing to a mask)
- If you are not using your oxygen cylinders ensure that the valve is turned off. If you have a concentrator make sure it is turned off when not being used
- Never use aerosol sprays, hairsprays or deodorants, electric shavers, or electrical appliances whilst using your oxygen equipment
- Always report faulty equipment to the supplier as soon as possible, and keep the phone number of the oxygen equipment supplier handy.

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- If you are using your oxygen concentrator then keep any trailing cables and plastic pipes away from where anyone is walking.

Your Estate Manager can provide further advice and guidance if necessary.