Oxygen

Your doctor may have ordered oxygen to help you breathe easier. Oxygen delivers oxygen to the blood and may help you move around, sleep or do other things you enjoy more comfortably. Oxygen is highly flammable but safe when oxygen equipment is cared for and used correctly.

Oxygen Safety
Oxygen is highly flammable, and anything that sparks or catches fire will burn faster when oxygen is present. To prevent a fire, follow these guidelines when using oxygen:

- Do not smoke or allow others to smoke in the same room with you. No smoking signs should be placed on the front door of your home. If you are using an oxygen tank and traveling in the car, do not allow others to smoke in the car.

- Do not use electric razors, hair dryers, or other electrical equipment when your oxygen is on. The equipment may spark and mix with the oxygen to cause a fire.

- Stay at least 10 feet away from gas stoves, candles and fireplaces when your oxygen is on.

- Do not use flammable products, such as aerosol sprays, rubbing alcohol, paint thinners, and other oil-based lubricants near oxygen.

- Do not use petroleum jelly, such as Vaseline® to moisten your lips or nose when using oxygen. If your lips or nose are dry, use a water-based lubricant such as K-Y® jelly.

- Do not change the liter flow without talking to your doctor or Arbor Hospice nurse.

- Do not place the tubing under furniture, bed covers, carpets, clothing or other items that could kink the tubing and prevent the oxygen from flowing through the tubing. Remind yourself, family and friends of the placement of the oxygen tubing to prevent tripping and falls.
**Types of Oxygen**
Your doctor will order the amount of oxygen you are to receive, the type of oxygen equipment to use, and when to use your oxygen. An oxygen concentrator is a machine that makes oxygen from the air and concentrates it. An oxygen concentrator runs on electricity and provides oxygen for you when you are at home. A humidifier is a plastic jar with distilled water in it. The humidifier warms and adds moisture to the oxygen to make it easier for you to breathe. Tubing attaches to the humidifier and provides the oxygen to you through a nasal cannula.

Oxygen tanks store oxygen in cylinders, are portable and are used when you do not have electricity or when you go out of the home. While an oxygen concentrator can make oxygen from the air, oxygen in tanks can run out and may need to be replaced when you use it.

**How to Use An Oxygen Concentrator**
Your doctor will order oxygen and the liter flow. You may need to use the oxygen all the time, or just some of the time such as when you are active, sleeping or short of breath. Your doctor and Arbor Hospice team can help you determine when oxygen will provide the most benefit. When using oxygen, you should:

- Make sure the oxygen concentrator is plugged in. The oxygen concentrator should not be placed in direct sunlight and should be at least 12-24 inches away from walls, furniture, curtains, space heaters, or other combustible objects to prevent a fire and to allow air to circulate around the machine.

- Check the level of distilled water in the humidifier bottle. There is a line on the humidifier bottle that shows the correct level. If the water level is below the correct level, refill the bottle with distilled water. The bottle should be changed every 14 days.

- Check the filter on the back of the concentrator. It should be brushed off weekly to prevent dust from clogging the filter.

- Turn the oxygen on. You will hear a short alarm that lets you know that the oxygen is flowing properly. You should notice bubbling in the humidifier bottle.
• Check the flow rate to be sure it is at the level prescribed by your doctor. Turn the dial until the metal ball rises to the correct level. Do not change the prescribed flow rate unless you have spoken to your doctor or Arbor Hospice nurse.

• Place the nasal cannula in your nose. The nasal cannula is a tube with small prongs on the end that fit into your nostrils. The cannula should be changed every fourteen days.

• If the tubing irritates your skin, use cotton balls, gauze pads, or other non-flammable items under the tubing to protect the skin. Check with your Arbor Hospice nurse for other ideas to prevent irritation from the tubing.

• Oxygen can be drying to your mouth and nose. Clean your mouth and nose frequently. Use a water-based lubricant, such as KY® jelly, if needed to moisten your lips and nostrils.

• If you feel the oxygen is not flowing correctly, check the tubing for kinks, blockages or disconnection from the concentrator. If there are no noticeable blockages and you feel you are not getting enough oxygen, put the nasal cannula in a glass of water. If bubbles appear, oxygen is flowing. If you remain short of breathe, please call your Arbor Hospice nurse. Your increased shortness of breath may be caused by things other than the oxygen equipment, such as your disease or activity level. Your Arbor Hospice nurse can help you determine the cause of your shortness of breath and suggest additional ways to make you more comfortable.

• Turn the concentrator off when you are not using it.

• Call your Arbor Hospice team if the alarm does not go on when the machine is turned on, if the alarm does not go off shortly after turning the machine on, if the alarm goes off repeatedly after the concentrator is on for a period of time or if you have other problems with your oxygen concentrator.

**How to Use Oxygen Tanks**

Oxygen tanks store oxygen in a cylinder and do not need electricity to operate. Oxygen tanks are portable and allow you to travel, such as for doctors appointments, special outings, or walks outside. Tanks also provide oxygen for you in cases of electrical failure. Oxygen tanks have a gauge at the top to show you how much oxygen is left in the tank and a flow meter that shows the flow rate. An oxygen tank may or may not have a humidifier bottle attached to it. Oxygen tanks come in many sizes. The size used most for travel is the E-tank. The following guidelines will help you use oxygen tanks safely and effectively:
• Open the tank with the E-wrench provided to you when the oxygen was delivered. Use the E-wrench to turn the valve counterclockwise. You should see the needle on the pressure gauge move. When the needle stops moving, check the amount of oxygen left in the tank. The needle on a full tank will go to 2000 psi on the dial. A new oxygen tank should be ordered when the tank is one-quarter full.

• Set the flow rate as prescribed by your doctor. Do not change the flow rate until you have spoken with your doctor or Arbor Hospice nurse.

• Place the nasal cannula in your nose or the mask over your mouth and nose.

• If you feel the oxygen is not flowing correctly, check the gauge at the top of the tank for the amount of oxygen left in the tank. If the tank is less than one quarter full, the tank may need to be replaced. Check the tubing for kinks, blockages or disconnection from the tank. If there are no noticeable blockages and you feel you are not getting enough oxygen, put the nasal cannula in a glass of water. If bubbles appear, oxygen is flowing. If you remain short of breathe, please call your Hospice nurse. Your Arbor Hospice nurse can help you determine the cause of your shortness of breath and suggest additional ways to make you more comfortable when traveling or walking outside.

• When traveling by car, take as much oxygen as you will need for the amount of time you are out. Your Arbor Hospice nurse can tell you how many tanks to take with you.

• Place the oxygen tanks in an upright position on the floor of the car or seat behind you.

• Turn the tank off when not using it by turning the flow rate to zero and turning the knob at the top clockwise.

**Special Instructions:**

Type of oxygen equipment: ____________________________

________________________________

Liter flow rate: ____________________________
When to use oxygen: 

Please feel free to call your Arbor Hospice team any time with any questions or concerns you may have about oxygen or shortness of breath. We want to be responsive to your needs and concerns.