

OXYGEN THERAPY AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Oxygen Therapy and Quality of Life

Some patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF) may be prescribed oxygen therapy after being assessed by a doctor. For those patients, oxygen therapy may allow them to be more physically active. While medications and alternative therapeutic treatments are available, taking supplemental oxygen can help patients with IPF feel better and get the oxygen they need today to maintain a more active lifestyle. It's important to remember that, for some, oxygen therapy may only be needed during activity, but for others, it may also be needed at rest and—possibly—during sleep.

Ensuring your body has the oxygen it needs plays an important role in IPF management. Because IPF reduces the capacity your lungs have to deliver enough oxygen to your blood, muscles, heart, brain, and vital organs—they can become oxygen deprived, resulting in many side effects, including: added strain on your heart, worsened shortness of breath, and fatigue—keeping you from being active.



“Getting enough oxygen to all your body’s cells is essential. IPF can result in oxygen imbalances.”

The Myth of Supplemental Oxygen Addiction

Oxygen therapy is a non-addictive treatment that helps deliver oxygen to your body when your blood oxygen levels are low. As scarring in the lung and IPF progresses, the lung is injured in such a way that makes it hard to take a deep breath and get fresh oxygen-enriched air to all areas of the lung. Breathing in higher concentrations (or amounts) of oxygen with supplemental oxygen helps to increase your blood oxygen levels, which benefits vital organ function and helps you to be more active. If you have low blood oxygen levels and do not use supplemental oxygen, you may experience shortness of breath, fatigue, and damage to other areas of the body.



“Remember, oxygen is not addictive; it is important for life.”

Easy Answers to Big Questions



What Will People Think?

One of the biggest challenges patients can face is the stigma that is sometimes associated with IPF. Patients can become self-conscious when carrying around an oxygen tank, or when suffering from uncontrollable symptoms such as shortness of breath and coughing, in public.

Taking charge can make a difference.

There are many ways patients can learn to handle the stigma often associated with IPF and carrying oxygen in public.



Become an Advocate

Many patients work to make a difference by using their condition to help others and to help bring awareness to IPF.



Join a Support Group

Joining a support group and sharing your experience with other IPF patients can make a real difference in coping with the emotions and challenges patients face when living with IPF.

Whatever the challenge, it's always better to brave the public than to stay at home and miss out on living a full life. Fresh air, nature, socializing with other people, and remaining active are key ingredients to maintaining a normal and fulfilling lifestyle.



Is Oxygen a Drug?

Supplemental oxygen is a prescription medication.

Oxygen therapy is considered a medical treatment, and therefore must be prescribed by a doctor. Some patients may require oxygen therapy at home throughout the day, while others may need it only when exerting themselves and/or during sleep.

If you're a candidate for supplemental oxygen therapy, your prescription may include:



- How much oxygen you need, and when (at rest, during exercise, while sleeping, etc.).
- How many hours a day you will need supplemental oxygen.
- What type of oxygen and delivery system is ordered, ideally one that will best suit your lifestyle.

3 Is Oxygen Addictive?

No, however, you may quickly realize that by using oxygen as your doctor

prescribes, you feel better and can do more of the activities that are important to you. Once you can see and feel the benefits, you may make the choice to continue using it as prescribed.



What is the Cost of Oxygen Therapy?

Can I Afford It?

Most insurance plans, including Medicare and Medicaid, will cover most costs related to your supplemental oxygen therapy, as long as your test results show that you need the oxygen. Additional costs can also be covered by your supplemental policies. Insurance coverage varies, so check with your insurance provider about your coverage. Your health care provider can help you choose the right company to meet your needs for supplemental oxygen.

[Learn more at medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov)

Living with Oxygen



Preparing the House

When using supplemental oxygen, it's important to prepare your house in advance. Avoid using oxygen around open flames, cigarettes, and heaters, and be sure to store oxygen tanks safely.



Traveling with Oxygen

Today, air travel with oxygen is possible when you prepare in advance. Some patients are able to carry a small, travel-size portable oxygen concentrator when they travel to make getting around easier.



Monitoring Oxygen Levels

Monitoring oxygen levels with a finger oximeter can help you to see for yourself how your body functions and how you feel when your oxygen levels are above or below 90 percent. Being short of breath doesn't always mean your oxygen levels are low—an oximeter is one way to measure oxygen levels and track reading changes with different levels of activity. Always discuss oximeter use and your oxygen prescription with your physician.



Learn more about living with oxygen and how to better manage your next trip

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