

Assistive Devices Program

Programme D'Appareils Et Accessoires Fonctionnels

Home Oxygen Program - Client

What does the Home Oxygen Program do?

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Home Oxygen Program pays for long term oxygen therapy and related equipment and supplies for eligible Ontario residents who need them.

Who is eligible?

Anyone with a valid Ontario Health Card issued in their name who has a chronic illness or dysfunction that requires long-term oxygen therapy.

Who is not covered?

Those who:

- Are in a chronic or acute care hospital, or
- Need oxygen because of a work-related injury contact the Workplace Safety & Insurance Board
- Qualify for Veterans' Affairs Canada, Group A Benefits or
- Do not meet the medical criteria

What expenses are covered?

You will receive full coverage of the monthly costs of a basic oxygen system if you:

- are 65 or older
- receive benefits from Ontario Disability Support Program, Ontario Works, Assistance to Children with Severe Disabilities, or professional services through a Community Care Access Centre or live in a long-term care facility.

The costs covered include basic disposable supplies such as masks, nasal cannula and bubble humidifiers.

If you do not qualify for full coverage, you will receive 75 percent coverage. You will be responsible for the remaining 25 percent.

If you have private medical coverage, check to see if your insurance company will pay for charges not covered under this program.

How do I apply?

Your doctor, who must be a licensed Ontario Physician, must complete a Home Oxygen Program application form. If your doctor does not already have copies of this form he or she can call the program at 1-800-268-6021 or 416-327-8804 and TTY 416-327-4282 or 1-800-387-5559.

What medical criteria do I have to meet?

Before your doctor completes the application for long-term oxygen therapy, he or she must use all available treatments to stabilise your condition. Also, if you smoke, you will be advised to stop.

If you are 18 years or younger, an oximetry test once each year must show you still need oxygen therapy. Upon reaching 19 years of age and completing an oximetry test, if you meet eligibility requirements, no further tests are required to continue to receive home oxygen funding assistance.

If you are a new applicant to the program and 19 years or older, a blood gas test must be done to show you need oxygen therapy. At ninety days and 12 months after you have started using home oxygen, reassessments of your oxygen need are required. An oximetry test must be done to confirm that you continue to need oxygen therapy.

After the last oximetry test (12 months), you will not be required to send in any further tests to continue to receive oxygen-funding assistance. However, if your doctor tells us you no longer need oxygen or there is a disruption in your oxygen funding for longer than thirty-one (31) days, you will need retesting to receive oxygen-funding assistance. A copy of your oximetry test results must be attached to your application form by your doctor or home oxygen supplier.

What's involved in these tests?

A blood gas test is usually done in hospital. It involves taking blood from one of your arteries.

An oximetry test can be done by your doctor or other qualified health professional. A small sensor is placed, usually on your finger, to read how oxygen is in your blood.

What if my test results do not meet the medical criteria?

If your test results do not meet the medical criteria, you will not be eligible for funding.

If your doctor feels there are other medical reasons for the oxygen, we ask that your doctor write to us and include detailed medical information. We will review it and let you and your doctor know our decision in writing.

How do I arrange for oxygen service?

Call toll-free 1-800-268-6021 or 416-327-8804 for a list of registered vendors. These vendors have agreed to follow the Home Oxygen Program policies and cannot charge more than the approved amount for oxygen and related equipment.

How do I know what kind of system to get?

Your doctor may suggest a system. Or you can ask your vendor to show you the different systems available.

There are three types of systems: cylinder, liquid and concentrator. We've provided a description of the different systems on the last page of this fact sheet.

Will I need oxygen therapy for the rest of my life?

Your doctor will decide whether you need long-term oxygen therapy. You may no longer need to have oxygen therapy after completing the treatment your doctor has prescribed.

Shortness of breath does not always mean you have a low oxygen level. It may be caused by activity, lifestyle, lung disease, allergies or stress. In cases like these, your doctor may be able to recommend ways to ease your symptoms.

Are there any precautions I should take when using an oxygen system?

Oxygen users must take precautions because oxygen aids combustion.

Keep oxygen systems away from sources of heat or open flame. Do not smoke or let anyone else smoke in the area where you use oxygen. Smoking is a health risk and eliminates the benefits of oxygen therapy. It is also a fire hazard. REMIND visitors to refrain from smoking.

Ask your oxygen vendor for a warning sign you can post wherever you use oxygen. Also let your local fire department know you have oxygen in your home.

Store oxygen in a well-ventilated area. Do not store cylinders or liquid units in a closet.

Do not use Vaseline or other petroleum products on your face. If the oxygen or tubing causes irritation and drying of the nose, call your doctor or oxygen supplier for suggested remedies.

Ask the person delivering your oxygen to watch how you fill your portable liquid unit. Frost injuries to the skin can occur if filling is not done correctly.

Types of Oxygen Systems

The following outlines the types of oxygen systems. There are three types of oxygen systems:

Concentrator

This machine makes oxygen by taking in room air and sifting out the oxygen. It must be plugged into a grounded electrical outlet. Because the oxygen concentrator “makes” the oxygen, it does not need to be replaced or refilled regularly. A backup oxygen cylinder is provided in case of a power failure.

Active people may also use (portable) oxygen cylinders along with their concentrators. The cylinders are used away from home.

Some suppliers carry lightweight aluminium cylinders for easier handling.

Cylinder

This is a tank of compressed oxygen. Large tanks are used inside the home, and small tanks are used for outings or travel. Large ones are often used for babies who need special equipment. The length of time cylinders last depends on the amount of oxygen the person uses.

Liquid system

This system stores oxygen in liquid form. The liquid is kept in large stationary containers called reservoirs. Portable units are filled from the reservoir for travel or use outside the home. The liquid turns into gas before it leaves the container and it remains a gas when it is breathed in.

The length of time these three systems last depends on the amount of oxygen a person uses.

Conserving devices

Oxygen systems deliver oxygen continuously while you inhale and exhale. However, when you exhale most of the oxygen is vented into the room. Conserving devices help reduce the amount wasted. Your oxygen supply lasts longer and you can go for longer outings.

Conserving devices also cut down on the number of deliveries from your vendor. Ask your doctor or vendor about the different types available.

What if I have more questions?

For further information, write:

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
Assistive Devices Program
7th Floor, 5700 Yonge Street
Toronto ON M2M 4K5

OR visit our web-site at:
www.health.gov.on.ca

OR call:

Toll-free:.....1-800-268-6021
Toronto:.....416-327-8804
TDD/TTY:.....416-327-4282
TDD/TTY:.....1-800-387-5559
Fax:.....416-327-8192

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