

# Oxygen therapy in the hospital

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## What is oxygen therapy?

Oxygen therapy is used to raise the level of oxygen in your child's blood. It may be needed for only a few hours, a few days or for several weeks. This depends on your child's condition.

There are different ways to give oxygen. This includes:

- A nasal cannula (soft, thin tube with two prongs that fit in your child's nostrils). A member of the care team may use tape to hold it in place. This is the easiest way to give oxygen.
- An oxygen mask that fits over your child's nose and mouth or throat. An elastic band holds the mask in place. Your child may need a mask if they need higher levels of oxygen.
  - If your child has a tracheostomy (trach tube), the mask will fit over the tube. An elastic band holds the mask in place.

Oxygen flows from a special opening in the wall of your child's hospital room through a tube and into the cannula or mask. If your child needs to leave the room, the care team will remove the tube from the wall and attach it to a portable oxygen tank.

Your child must wear the cannula or mask at all times, or as advised by the doctor. You can still help your child with feeding, bathing and playing.

## What is a pulse oximeter (pulse ox)?

A pulse oximeter (pulse ox) is a machine that measures the oxygen in your child's blood and helps the doctor know how much oxygen to give. It also checks your child's heart rate. A pulse ox has a:

- Machine
- Probe taped to your child's finger, toe, foot or ear. The probe will not hurt or shock your child.
- Thin wire that connects the probe to the machine

Your child may wear a pulse ox all the time or only need his oxygen level checked a few times a day.

If the machine alarms:

- Use the call light to call your child's nurse.
- Never turn off the alarm or machine.
- False alarms can happen when your child moves. Even then, do not turn off the alarm or machine.
- If the machine is not working, call your child's nurse **right away**.

## How can I use oxygen safely?

When using oxygen, follow these safety tips:

- Your child should not play with toys that have friction motors or give off sparks.
- Your child and the oxygen source should be kept 4 to 6 feet away from any heat source.

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**

# Oxygen therapy in the hospital, continued

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- Do not smoke around your child; sparks from cigarettes could easily start a fire. Do not expose your child to secondhand smoke.
- Do not use any aerosol sprays, grease, oil or petroleum-based products (like Vaseline) on oxygen equipment or near your child. These materials burn easily and can start a fire.
- Do not use any petroleum-based lotions or creams (like Vaseline) on your child's face or upper chest. You may use cocoa butter or aloe vera products to keep your child's skin moist. Check the contents on the product label.

**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.**

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**