



## OXYGEN THERAPY

Purpose: Oxygen is 21% of the air we breathe. When our lungs are damaged, obstructed, or restricted, they cannot oxygenate the blood. Each cell in our bodies must have oxygen to live. Raising the oxygen percentage allows more oxygen to pass into the blood. Your physician must order oxygen. Oxygen is **not flammable** but it does provide fuel for fires.

Prescription: Your physician has written a prescription for oxygen and this value should *never* be deviated from without first consulting him/her.

Delivery Modes: There are three basic ways oxygen can be delivered. Oxygen concentrators are the most common and they are machines that concentrate the oxygen in the air we breathe. Compressed cylinders contain oxygen under pressure and allow portability. This pressurized oxygen is measured in pounds-per-square-inch gauge, or psig. Liquid oxygen is oxygen that has been cooled to allow it to turn into a liquid. This liquid is converted back into a gas when it's brought back to room temperature. Liquid systems require no electrical power and can be packaged for portability.

Use: Once the oxygen delivery method is decided upon, an appliance must be used to deliver it to the patient. The most common are nasal cannulas and oxygen masks. Nasal cannulas are prongs that are inserted into the nose and are suited for most needs. Nasal cannulas have curved prongs and the curved side should be down. These cannulas should be changed every two weeks or when they are soiled. Cannulas work exactly the same whether the user is a mouth breather or a nasal breather. When reading your flowmeter, you must read the **middle** of the float not the top.

Oxygen masks cover the entire nose and mouth areas and are intended for higher flowrates and oxygen percentages. A good seal on the face is needed to delivery accurate oxygen amounts. The holes on the side of the mask should never be obstructed. These ports allow your exhaled air to vent out of the mask. The *minimum* flowrate on an oxygen mask is 5 LPM.

**Humidifiers:** Oxygen that is delivered has no moisture in it. Liquid oxygen is the driest. Liquid oxygen stationary units should always have a humidifier regardless of the flowrate. Do not put a humidifier on a liquid portable unit.

Humidifiers are disposable devices that bubble the oxygen through a column of water. This water attaches itself to the oxygen molecules. These devices should be filled with **distilled** water only, **do not use tap water!** This distilled water can be purchased inexpensively through your local drug store. When filling your humidifier, always empty out old water before adding new water. Change your humidifier at least weekly.

**Emergencies:** Discount Drug Mart Professional Medical Equipment and Services understands that oxygen services should never be interrupted. They maintain a technician on-call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. If your equipment fails or your supplies are diminished, **call the main number and speak to the on-call technician.** You should always maintain an adequate supply of oxygen on hand in case of natural disaster or other emergency. Discount Drug Mart Professional Medical Equipment and Services can assist you in setting your safety limit.