

## Chronic Lung Disease: If Oxygen Is Prescribed

Supplemental oxygen is prescribed if tests show that the level of oxygen in your blood is too low. If the level stays too low for too long, serious problems can develop in many parts of the body. Supplemental oxygen helps to relieve your symptoms and prevent future problems by getting more oxygen to the blood. Depending on your test results, you may need oxygen all the time. Or it may only be needed during certain activities, such as exercise or sleep. When oxygen is prescribed, you'll be referred to a medical equipment company. They will set up the oxygen unit and teach you how to use it.

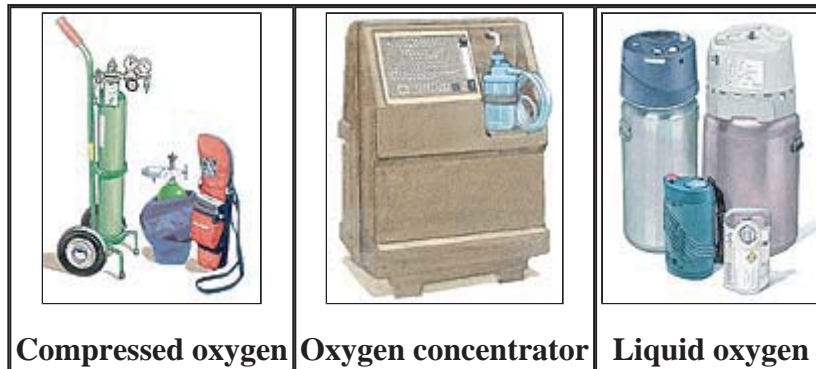
### Nasal Cannula

Oxygen is most often inhaled through a **nasal cannula** (lightweight tube with two hollow prongs that fit just inside the nose).



**A nasal cannula should be placed in the nose with the prongs arching toward you.**

### Types of Supplemental Oxygen



Prescribed oxygen comes in several forms. You may use more than one type, depending on when you need oxygen.

- **Compressed oxygen** is oxygen gas stored in a tank. Because the oxygen is stored under pressure, these tanks must be handled carefully. Gauges on the tank can be used to adjust the oxygen flow rate. Your doctor will determine what this should be. Small tanks can be carried. Larger tanks are on wheels and can be pulled around the house.
- **An oxygen concentrator** is a machine about the size of a large suitcase. It plugs into an electrical outlet. The machine takes oxygen from the air and concentrates it. It's then delivered to you through plastic tubing. The tubing is long enough so that you can move around the house. When you're using the concentrator, it must be kept somewhere that has a good supply of fresh air. (Don't keep it in a confined space, like a closet.) You may be set up on a concentrator if you need oxygen all the time or while you're sleeping.
- **Liquid oxygen** results when oxygen gas is cooled to a very low temperature. It's kept in special containers that maintain this low temperature. When you use liquid oxygen, it's warmed and becomes gas before reaching the cannula. Most tanks come with a portable unit that you can carry or pull on a cart. Some of these weigh only a few pounds. Liquid oxygen units are easy to carry around. If you need oxygen all the time or during activity, this kind of unit can help you stay active.

## Oxygen Is Prescribed Just for You

Your doctor will prescribe oxygen based on your needs. Here are a few things you should know:

- A therapist from the medical equipment company will explain when to use oxygen and what type to use. You'll be taught how to use and maintain your oxygen equipment.
- You must use the exact rate of oxygen prescribed for each activity. Don't increase or decrease the amount without asking your doctor first.
- Supplemental oxygen is a medication. It's not addictive and causes no side effects when used as directed.