



Oxygen Therapy Safety Tips: Preventing Fires and Other Accidents

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Our review of oxygen therapy would not be complete without addressing safety. The potential for a fire hazard around oxygen is well-known. However, this is sometimes forgotten or overlooked. There are a few simple precautions that can be taken to create a safe home environment when using oxygen.

- Oxygen canisters should be kept at least 5-10 feet away from gas stoves, lighted fireplaces, woodstoves, candles or other sources of open flames.
- Do not use electric razors while using oxygen. (These are a possible source of sparks.)
- Do not use oil, grease or petroleum-based products on the equipment. Do not use it near you while you use oxygen. These materials are highly flammable and will burn readily with the presence of oxygen. Avoid petroleum-based lotions or creams, like Vaseline, on your face or upper chest. Check the ingredients of such products before purchase. If a skin moisturizer is needed, consider using cocoa butter, aloe vera or other similar products. For lubrication or rehydration of dry nasal passages, use water-based products. Your pharmacist or care provider can suggest these.
- Post signs in every room where oxygen is in use. Make sure that absolutely NO SMOKING occurs in the home or in the car when oxygen is in use.
- Secure an oxygen cylinder to a solidly fixed object to avoid creating a missile out of the tank. This might happen if it was accidentally knocked over and gas was allowed to escape.
- Use caution with oxygen tubing so you do not trip over it or become entangled in furniture.

- Be familiar with the equipment and the safety checks established by the medical equipment provider. Keep their contact telephone numbers, and the numbers for other emergency services, posted near a phone. Do not try to repair broken equipment on your own. Request this service from the oxygen provider.
- Make sure smoke detectors in the home are working. Have fresh batteries installed. Perform monthly checks. Have a fire extinguisher available in the home as well. (Use type ABC.) Create and practice an escape and rescue plan in the event of a fire.
- Notify the local fire department, gas and electric companies and telephone company when home oxygen therapy is started. Request a "priority service listing." This is for those times when there is a power or telephone failure or repairs are needed on any utility.

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