

High Flow Oxygen Therapy [O₂]

Approximately 80% of CH sufferers find inhaling oxygen at 8 to 15 litres per minute very effective in dealing with cluster attacks.. Most people find O₂ quickly aborts an attack. Some use it while waiting for other abortives to “kick in” - but most report that for maximum effect and quick relief it must be taken as early as possible at the start of an attack. Breathe as normally as you can, and some users find breathing in through the mouth and out through the nose helps regulate the 'panic' breathing rate at the start of an attack. Hold the mask to your face and ensure a good fit so that you are inhaling as near 100% oxygen as possible.

The time taken for O₂ therapy to be effective can vary, but most say they can abort an attack within 10-15 minutes: if not actually aborted in this time, the majority of people say the pain level reduces very quickly.

As soon as you know an attack is imminent, inhale the oxygen at between 8 – 15 litres per minute (adjust the flow to keep the reservoir bag on the mask inflated). We advise that you stay on oxygen for an additional 5 – 10 minutes after the attack has gone, at a lower flow rate to reduce the chances of 'rebound attacks'. If the oxygen has had no effect after 20 minutes it is unlikely that the attack will be aborted. Do not assume that oxygen does not work for you after only one failed treatment, try again with the next attack.

Your GP will need to complete three forms, first of all an Individual Home Oxygen Risk Management Form, [IHORM], a Home Oxygen Consent [HOC] form and Home Oxygen Order Form Part A (HOOF) which the surgery should fax to the oxygen company who will contact you direct to arrange delivery. A copy of the IHORM and the HOOF is available under the Resources and Downloads link on the OUCH website. The HOOF is part completed ready for a cluster headache sufferer. **The use of oxygen is contra-indicated if you have COPD, or emphysema and we would advise a health check with your GP to ensure that you do not have either condition before starting oxygen therapy.**

Using oxygen can dry the nasal passages and the skin surrounding nose and mouth, you are advised **not** to use petroleum jelly or petroleum based skin products. A water based gel is suggested instead.

It is important to follow the instructions on the O₂ cylinder and please remember that Oxygen is highly combustible.

Do not smoke or use naked flames near it! For further safety advice, contact your oxygen supplier.

It is advisable to notify your local fire station that you will be storing oxygen on your premises and they will carry out safety checks on your home and where you store the oxygen. They are grateful to know in advance if there are any additional accelerant risks [like oxygen] before they attend an incident.

Finally it is very useful to have feedback on how you found the treatment. Keep us informed via our message board, by e-mail, or by writing to us.

Call our helpline for further advice on obtaining oxygen and reference sources to show to GPs who are unwilling to prescribe oxygen.

OUCH (UK) HELPLINE: 01646 651 979
