

Information for Patients in England and Wales: Arranging, trying and using Short-burst Oxygen Therapy to abort Cluster Headaches

High flow short-burst oxygen is effective at aborting attacks for some patients with cluster headache. You should be offered to try high flow short-burst oxygen as soon as you have been diagnosed with cluster headaches.

Oxygen can be ordered for you by your doctor, either GP or neurologist, provided the order forms are completed appropriately. If your doctor needs information on how to do this a leaflet with details 'Information for GPs and Neurologists: Arranging Short-burst Oxygen Therapy for patients in England and Wales with Cluster Headaches' is attached. You will also need to sign a form yourself giving your consent for information to be shared so that the company providing oxygen has the details they need to provide you with oxygen at home.

You should be provided with:

- Two free-standing cylinders to use at home (or work) so you can easily switch to the second cylinder when the first cylinder is empty and order a replacement. Each cylinder can treat between 8-30 attacks depending on the speed of response.
- Ambulatory cylinders so you can use oxygen easily when outside the home (carried in your car and/or in a storage backpack) if needed. These cylinders are much smaller so only contain enough oxygen to treat a small number of attacks (again depending on the speed of response)
- A mask called a non-rebreathe mask which has a reservoir bag and is used with the two holes covered.

You should use the oxygen at a setting of 12 litres/minute. If successful, an individual attack should be aborted within 15-20 minutes. If the attack is successfully aborted, you should stay on the oxygen for 5-10 minutes after the pain has gone to "mop up" the attack and prevent possible rebound, which some patients find is a problem.

If the attack is not aborted within 20 minutes you are unlikely to get relief for that attack by continued use and you should turn off the oxygen. This does not mean that further attacks will not respond to oxygen and it is worth trying oxygen again at the start of the next attack.

You may find it helpful to keep a diary of attacks and how well they respond to oxygen. If you do not find oxygen helpful, or do not want to continue to use it, you should let the doctor who ordered the oxygen know so that the oxygen can be cancelled. Oxygen is paid for on a daily basis whether you use it or not.

More information is available from the oxygen company who will provide your oxygen or OUCH (Organisation for the Understanding of Cluster Headache) at www.ouchuk.org; the UK Charity whose aim is to raise awareness of cluster headache with the medical profession and the public and to offer support and guidance to sufferers and their families.