

Traveling with Supplemental Oxygen

Now that we are moving towards warmer weather, many patients begin to think about vacations and traveling. Being on oxygen no longer means being home-bound as it once did. Traveling with oxygen can be enjoyable and safe with some pre-trip planning. Your oxygen supplier can help you make all the necessary arrangements.

Travel by Car or Camper.

Traveling in a car with oxygen can be very safe when using common sense in handling and storage of the equipment. It is important to calculate how much oxygen will be required. Your oxygen supplier will help you determine what your oxygen needs will be, and what equipment is available for your use.

Liquid Oxygen:

Liquid oxygen units are designed to remain in an upright position, otherwise they will quickly begin to vent the oxygen at an accelerated rate. Leave the window in the vehicle slightly cracked so the continued venting of oxygen does not accumulate in the vehicle. You may find that the amount of oxygen contents used may be at a rate slightly higher than you use at home. This is due to the constant agitation of the vehicle and should be expected.

Concentrators:

Concentrators may be stored in any position but should be well padded to protect against impact. Never store or transport oxygen concentrators with humidifiers attached. Concentrators are designed with built in thermostats to protect them from overheating. If a concentrator has been stored in a truck of a vehicle, or exposed to very hot temperatures, the concentrator may require a short time in a cool area to begin working properly.

Small Cylinders:

Small cylinders can be stored in any position but should always be protected against impact to the valve on top of the cylinder. Keep in mind that it is extremely rare for most home care companies to have the capability to refill cylinders. Travel with enough oxygen to last the entire trip. Do not store oxygen cylinders where they are exposed to extreme temperatures. If you use the cylinder en route, make sure the liter flow knob is protected. Cylinders exposed to higher than normal temperatures, or higher altitudes, may appear to have a higher content reading. This is normal, and you should ask your home care company to help you estimate the duration of contents.

Travel by Air.

Travel by air is the most difficult of all modes of transportation, but can be made easier with conscientious pre-planning. The airline industry is essentially unregulated in this area and as such there is great variability in traveling with oxygen policies. There are some common guidelines that all airlines follow. All require advance notice, usually 48 hours. Most if not all will levy a charge for each leg of your flight. The fee is generally between \$40.00 and \$100.00 US. All airlines require a letter from your doctor stating your need for oxygen and your flow rate. You may check your empty portable through baggage prior to departure. You will be responsible for supplying any oxygen needed prior to your departure, and at your final destinations, including any layovers.

Some airlines place greater restrictions than others, so be sure to check with your travel agent early in your planning. If you have specific questions regarding air travel with oxygen, call your oxygen supplier. They can help you make all the necessary arrangements, especially if you will need to be met with oxygen at your destination airport.

Travel by Boat.

Many oxygen patients enjoy cruises, and there are several cruise lines that will accommodate oxygen patients. These include American Hawaii Cruise Lines, Costa Cruise Lines, Carnival Cruise Lines, Princess Cruise Lines and many others. All cruise lines require at least one letter from your physician stating your need for oxygen. Consult with your travel agent for specific requirements.

Travel by Train.

Traveling by train can be very easy with some attention to pre-planning. Amtrak (1-800-872-7245) requires a 12 hour advance notice. They do allow you to bring your portable and stationary unit if it doesn't exceed 75 pounds. Your stationary unit must be removed from it's wheels. If you use a concentrator, it must be able to be unplugged for 12 hours. You must have a physicians letter stating your need for oxygen. When you call Amtrak tell them you have a special service request.

All SCOOP patients should make sure they have extra cleaning supplies with them. An extra catheter and hose is also a good idea. When possible, it makes good sense to try and locate a physician familiar with transtracheal oxygen in the area you will be visiting. Ask your physician to help you with this request. If you are traveling by air, ask your oxygen supplier for a variety of oxygen tubing connectors. It is wise to be prepared for any type of connection to your SCOOP hose.

Traveling with Oxygen is not quite hassle free, but can be managed easily if you plan ahead. Your oxygen supplier will be happy to help you make arrangements. Being on oxygen is not an obstacle to enjoying a high quality of life. This is especially true for transtracheal oxygen patients who wish to travel.

No matter what means of travel you choose, there are some steps you must take two to four weeks before your departure.

1. Discuss the proposed trip with your doctor.
2. Get prescriptions for adequate amounts of required medications and fill them before you leave.
3. Get extra prescriptions for oxygen to make it easier to get oxygen in route.
4. Get instructions from your doctor for what to do should you develop a medical problem.
5. Get a summary of your medical history from your doctor.