Dangers of Smoking Whilst Using Oxygen Therapy

Important Information



Service provided by:

BOC
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Smoking around oxygen is extremely dangerous and may cause clothing and hair to catch fire and burn much more vigorously than in air. Never smoke or allow someone else to smoke nearby whilst using your oxygen equipment.



The picture above shows facial burns on a patient who lit a cigarette whilst using oxygen therapy.

Oxygen enrichment

Your clothing could become enriched with oxygen as you use your medical oxygen. Clothing and materials which become enriched with oxygen will burn vigorously if ignited. Your clothing will continue to be enriched, even after you have turned off your oxygen supply.

Make sure you ventilate your clothing in the open air for at least 20 minutes before smoking or going near an open flame or source of ignition.

Oils and grease

Oils, grease and materials contaminated with these substances are particularly hazardous in the presence of an oxygen enriched atmosphere, as they can ignite extremely easily and **burn very violently**.

- Ensure that your hands are clean and do not use oil-based creams and moisturisers when using your medical oxygen system. This includes the use of oil-based lip moisturisers and make up.
- If using alcohol gel, please ensure that it is massaged in well, particularly between the webbing of fingers and allow time for evaporation to take place before handling oxygen equipment.
- Do not use oils or grease with your oxygen equipment.
- Use water-based products such as KY Jelly.

Other hazards

- Do not use aerosols such as hair sprays or deodorants whilst using your oxygen equipment.

Electronic cigarettes

Recent innovations in smoking cessation programmes have led to the introduction of so called "electronic cigarettes". These work on the principle of a heating element that vaporizes a liquid solution which delivers nicotine.

Electronic cigarettes include a power source, and this may be charged from a USB power port or by using a separate battery charger. These items when saturated with oxygen may ignite.

It has been reported that there could be a risk of an ignition of an electronic cigarette whilst a patient is undergoing oxygen therapy.

As a result, electronic cigarettes should **NOT** be used whilst on oxygen therapy.

Additionally, batteries of electronic cigarettes should not be charged in the vicinity of a patient undergoing oxygen therapy or the oxygen source itself.

If you are using electronic cigarettes you should follow the same safety principles adopted when smoking burning cigarettes.

Source of information: EIGA (European Industrial Gases Association) Safety Information 32/13.

Free NHS smoking cessation helpline

Call to speak to a trained adviser for free on **0800 022 4332**.

SMOKEFREE

Lines are open Monday-Friday from 9am to 8pm; Saturday & Sunday from 11am to 5pm or visit their website **www.smokefree.nhs.uk**

Alternatively, for advice and support regarding smoking cessation, talk to your GP or nurse.

For more information on general fire safety, please visit the Fire Kills website at **www.direct.gov.uk/firekills**

FIRE KILLS
YOU CAN PREVENT IT

BOC supports the Fire Kills campaign.

Many thanks to the family of the patient pictured for their consent to use the photograph. All the safety information contained in this document was obtained from European Industrial Gases Association (EIGA).

If you are visually impaired and require a large print copy, please contact us on

0800 136 603

Our normal working hours are Monday to Friday 8am until 6pm.
We are open 24 hours for emergencies only.

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HLC/504335-01/CST/0224