COASTAL MEDICAL

MONITOR OXYGEN LEVELS AT HOME

WHAT IS A PULSE OXIMETER?

A Pulse Oximeter is a small device that when placed on your finger will show numbers indicating your heart rate and the level of oxygen in your blood.

WHY SHOULD I TEST MY OXYGEN LEVEL?

When patients have underlying health conditions, such as asthma, heart disease and chronic pulmonary disease (COPD), it's recommended they monitor their pulse oxygen levels at home.

Checking your oxygen levels at home can provide reassurance as symptoms of shortness of breath can change during your illness and warn of an oncoming exacerbation. Monitoring for drops in your oxygen levels can help you to know when to reach out to your healthcare provider for help or care. A drop in oxygen levels can be an early warning sign before symptoms develop or get worse.

HOW TO USE A PULSE OXIMETER

- Apply the device to your index or middle finger and ensure it fits securely, with the screen facing up.

- Take readings indoors, while sitting at rest, limiting your movements, and breathing at a comfortable level.

- If your hands are cold, warm them prior to testing* and remove all nail polish from the testing finger.

- Observe readings for 30-60 seconds before recording your most common reading.
    - When reading your levels on an oximter, **PR or HR** is your pulse rate or heart rate, and **SpO2** is your **blood oxygen level**.

- Measure and record readings 2-3 times per day.

* Note: Some medical conditions, such as Raynaud's, can make it difficult to obtain a pulse oximetery reading.

WHAT DO I DO IF MY LEVEL DROPS?

If your number drops, check with your healthcare provider. We want most patients with COPD to maintain an oxygen **level of 92% or higher**. Patients who have an underlying lung disease, may already have a lower oxygen level and use home oxygen. It's also important for them to monitor at home and report a drop from their normal levels.

WHAT ABOUT OTHER SYMPTOMS?

The key to taking care of yourself at home with COPD is to monitor all your symptoms. If you use a pulse oximeter, do not rely on it as the only measure of your condition and contact your healthcare provider if you are experiencing worsening symptoms. More than usual coughing, wheezing or shortness of breath, changes in the color, thickness or amount of mucus you are having, feeling more tired or fatigued, more difficulty sleeping or swelling can often be signs that an exacerbation may be starting regardless of your oxygen level.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

It's possible to get false readings from an oximeter. **Things like dark nail polish, false nails or cold hands can throw off a reading.**

It's important to track your levels and not to react to a single reading.

WHERE CAN I FIND A PULSE OXIMETER

If you don't have a home pulse oximeter, you can usually purchase one at your local pharmacy. Often, you can use HSA, FSA or an insurance company over-the-counter (OTC) benefit to purchase one.

If you would like to purchase one online, there are many options. Here are two available from Amazon.com:

• iHealth Air Wireless Fingertip Pulse Oximeter (Bluetooth) ***view product***

• Pulse Oximeter Fingertip - Saturation Oxygen Monitor Fingertip (SpO2) for Adults (non-Bluetooth) ***view product***

Note:

• If you have **United Healthcare** insurance, you may be eligible for a free pulse oximeter. Email the address below for information: ***careteam@coastalmedical.com***

• If you are **unable to afford** one, but are interested in learning more, email the address below for more information: ***careteam@coastalmedical.com***

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