
Traveling with Oxygen

Before you travel

Give yourself plenty of time to make plans.

- **Talk with your healthcare provider.** Discuss your condition, what type of travel is safe for you, and what your oxygen needs will be while traveling. Also ask your healthcare provider for copies of your oxygen prescription and any other paperwork you'll need.
- **Talk with your medical equipment company.** You may need to arrange for oxygen to be delivered. This will depend on where you are going and how you are getting there. Or you may be able to go to a supplier when you arrive. Many oxygen suppliers have offices across the country. They also have offices in other countries. Your healthcare provider's office can also help with these plans.
- **Talk with the company you will be traveling through.** Find out the needs for traveling with oxygen.

Types of portable oxygen devices

Talk with your healthcare provider about one of these choices for travel:

- **Compressed oxygen tank.** This is oxygen gas stored in a tank under pressure. Small tanks can be carried.
- **Liquid oxygen unit.** This has oxygen gas cooled to a very low temperature. Most tanks come with a portable unit. You can carry this. Or you can pull it on a cart. Some of these weigh only a few pounds. Liquid oxygen units are easy to carry.
- **Portable oxygen concentrator (POC).** This takes in the air around you to concentrate oxygen and give you more of it. It uses electricity from a battery. Or by plugging into an outlet.

Traveling by car

- Place the oxygen unit upright. Put it on the floor or on the seat beside you. Secure the unit with a seat belt.
- Don't let anyone smoke in the car.
- Keep the windows open at least a little. This lets the air move around.
- Store extra oxygen units upright on the floor of the car. Make sure they are secured.
- Don't leave oxygen units in a hot car.

Traveling by cruise ship

- When you book your cruise, tell the cruise company that you'll be traveling with oxygen. Most cruise lines require a 4- to 6-week notice to travel with oxygen.

- Ask your healthcare provider to give the cruise company a letter that includes a brief health history and your oxygen prescription.
- Work with your oxygen supplier. They can have oxygen units sent to the cruise ship before you leave. Ask the supplier how many tanks you'll need at ports of call. They may also be able to arrange those for you.

Traveling by plane

- Before booking a ticket, find out the airline's policy for using oxygen in flight. You can't take compressed gas or liquid oxygen on planes. But you may be able to use a POC that is approved by the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration). Or the airline may give you in-flight oxygen for a fee. But they may not allow personal oxygen devices. You'll also be limited to where you can sit on the plane. Check the airline's website. Or call the customer service number to find out its policy.
- If the airline allows a POC, check that your POC is approved by the FAA. Check the agency's list of approved [devices](#).
- When you make your reservation, tell the airline that you'll need oxygen during the flight. Many airlines require that you tell them a few days to a week before you fly with oxygen. You may need to send a copy of your oxygen prescription. You may also need to send a letter from your healthcare provider. This letter will say you are approved for air travel and need in-flight oxygen. You may also need to fill out the airline's medical form. Bring extra copies of this information with you. Give a copy to staff members for all flights as needed.
- You may be using the airline's oxygen system. If so, bring your own nasal prongs or adaptor. Some airlines only give out masks.
- If you will be using the airline's oxygen system, keep in mind that it's only on the plane. You will need to use your POC in the airports before and after the flight.
- If you will be using your POC during the flight, bring extra batteries. Most airlines don't allow a POC to be plugged in on the plane.
- Arrange for extra oxygen supplies to be there when you arrive. Also arrange for oxygen for any layovers during your flight.

Traveling by bus or train

- Call the local bus or train office at least 3 days before you leave. Tell them that you're bringing oxygen. Ask about their policies. Most bus or train companies allow personal oxygen devices on board.
- Ask for seating in a nonsmoking area.
- Bring extra oxygen units as baggage if allowed.
- Carry your oxygen prescription with you.

Traveling outside of the U.S.

Policies for traveling with oxygen vary by country. Some international airlines don't have oxygen or allow devices. Work with a travel agent. They can help you make plans for

travel outside the U.S. Plan far ahead. And have all of your medical paperwork ready.

When to get help

While traveling, ask for medical help right away if you have any of the following:

- Pale skin or a blue color to your skin
- Heavier or faster breathing than normal
- Trouble breathing, even with your oxygen in place
- Chest pain