

Travel With Oxygen Therapy

If you use supplemental oxygen at home, you'll have to do a bit of extra planning before you travel. But taking care of your oxygen needs ahead of time gives you more freedom to enjoy yourself during your trip. Here are some guidelines for travel with oxygen therapy.

General guidelines for travel with oxygen therapy

Discuss your travel plans with your doctor.

They'll want to know where you're going, how you'll get there, and how long you'll stay. You can also talk about the climate and other environmental factors that might affect your health.

Discuss your travel plans with your home oxygen provider.

They can often help you arrange oxygen therapy during your trip. National chains can contact their other offices, and many local providers belong to larger national networks. Talking to your [oxygen provider](#) helps ensure you have enough oxygen to meet your needs.

If possible, work with a designated contact person. If that's not an option, write down the name of everyone you talk to. They'll probably ask for the following information:

- Your name, address, and phone number
- Contact information for your doctor (name and phone number)
- Your oxygen prescription, which should list your flow rate and the type of system and equipment you use. Include specifics about tubing, cannulas, humidifiers, and nebulizers.
- [If you're flying](#)
 - Your departing airport or port and city
 - Your airline and flight number, departure gate number, any stops or layovers, arrival airport, and arrival gate
- The address, phone number, and name of a contact person at your final destination
- Name and number of an emergency contact

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Review the specifics for each part of your trip. If there are any issues, point them out, and make adjustments. Make sure you understand what to expect at every step.

See [Air Travel with Oxygen](#)

Carry copies of your oxygen prescription.

They should list usage details and flow rates. You can pack one copy into your suitcase and carry one with your travel documents.

Arrange for oxygen therapy at your hotel.

If you need oxygen at your hotel, talk to the manager or concierge before your arrival. Let them know that your oxygen may arrive before you do. Find out where they'll store your oxygen and supplies until you check-in. You can also ask them to set your supplies up in your room ahead of time.

Next, talk to your oxygen supplier, to see if the manager or concierge can sign for the delivery. If not, you may be able to e-sign a delivery ticket and return it by email.

Be sure to know where the hotel will store your oxygen and related supplies if they arrive before your scheduled check-in time. You can also ask them to bring everything directly to your room.

Travel with oxygen — by train

Train travel is an accessible, comfortable alternative to air travel. And it requires most of the same type of advanced planning if you use oxygen therapy.

Start by talking to your doctor and home oxygen provider about your travel plans. This helps ensure you have the oxygen you need at all times.

Amtrak can accommodate your oxygen therapy needs with a 12-hour notice. They don't require a prescription or a letter from your

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doctor. But, carrying a copy is still a good idea, along with a brief medical history and a list of any medicine you take.

Using oxygen onboard the train

Unlike air travel, you can use your own oxygen equipment on the train, as long as the total weight of all your tanks is less than 120 lbs. (54 kg). Within that 120 lb. limit, Amtrak allows:

- No more than 2 tanks, 50 lbs (22.7 kg) each
- No more than 6 tanks, 20 lbs (9 kg) each

And Amtrak doesn't charge you for bringing your oxygen onboard but does limit oxygen to certain trains. And you will need to call Amtrak for a reservation.

When you're traveling by train, make sure you bring:

- Enough oxygen for the entire length of your trip, plus about 20% extra.
- Enough batteries to run your concentrator for up to 12 hours.
- Extra supplies like tubing, cannulas, etc.
- A list of emergency phone numbers, including your oxygen provider.

You'll also want to make arrangements ahead of time if you'll need more oxygen at your final destination.

Travel with oxygen — cruises

Cruises are another good travel option, as many cruise lines accept passengers with supplemental oxygen. They usually require 4-6 weeks advance notice, so the Special Services or Operations Departments can give their approval. And they'll ask for a letter from your doctor that includes:

- Approval for travel
- A brief medical history
- A current prescription for all medicine you take including oxygen

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Using oxygen onboard the ship

Most passengers make arrangements with their suppliers to have their oxygen equipment delivered right to the cruise ship. Most cruise lines prefer liquid oxygen systems, but you should check with your cruise line before you travel.

You won't have to pay extra to use the onboard oxygen you bring for yourself. However, you will have to avoid all smoking areas.

Travel with oxygen — by car

As with all other travel options, safe travel by car starts with talking to your doctor and your home oxygen supplier. Here are some other tips to keep you safe and comfortable:

Before you go

- Map out your travel route and find places to fill your tanks along the way. (Your oxygen supplier may have local stores.)
- Avoid driving during peak rush hour, as pollution can trigger breathing problems.
- Consider traveling on scenic back roads to avoid traffic.
- During the summer months, use the air conditioner, and roll up your windows.
- If you're traveling to an area with known allergens, time your trip to avoid peak season.
- If you use supplemental oxygen, bring enough cylinders and tanks for your whole trip. And don't forget to factor in the effects of altitude.
- Make sure you have a supply of prescription medicines to last your whole trip.

Make sure your car is ready for the trip

Common sense and good preparations go a long way when you're traveling by car — even if you don't use oxygen! Before you leave home, have your car serviced.

- Have the oil changed and assure all fluids are filled.
- Be sure the spare tire is inflated

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- Make sure you have a jack, jumper cables, flares, and emergency supplies like water and blankets
- If you plug your concentrator into your car's electrical system, make sure the alternator and battery can handle the extra demand.

Transporting oxygen safely

If you're traveling with extra oxygen, secure your cylinders or concentrator so they aren't banging around during the trip. Jolting and banging can cause the oxygen to escape.

Store liquid oxygen reservoirs upright to prevent spillage and potential skin burns. Make sure they're stored in a well-ventilated area, away from extreme heat. Never leave oxygen tanks in hot cars during the summer! Escaping oxygen can create a fire hazard.

Don't be afraid to outsource.

Are you overwhelmed at the thought of making your own arrangements? Let someone else handle the planning! There are companies that specialize in helping people who need supplemental oxygen while they travel. Ask your AlphaNet Coordinator to recommend one or see what you can find through an Internet Search.

As you have read, you have many options for safe, comfortable travel with oxygen. Choose the one that works best, follow our guidelines, and enjoy your trip!

Helpful links

- Our [Pre-Travel Checklist for Oxygen Therapy](#) makes it a little bit easier to plan for a trip.
- If you're [traveling by air](#), we have some tips for that, too.

For more in-depth information on this topic, please visit the [Big Fat Reference Guide \(BFRG\)](#). If you are enrolled in AlphaNet's Subscriber Portal, you can access the BFRG [here](#).