

Primary Care Services

Oxygen Storage and Handling Policy Version 1.0

Version	V1
Approved By (sponsor group)	Quality Assurance Group
Ratified By	Quality Assurance Group
Date Ratified	24 th July 2024
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Implementation Date	24 th July 2024
Last Review Date	July 2024
Next Review Date	July 2027

Version Control Summary

Version	Date	Author	Comment
1.0	24.07.24		

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This policy will be subject to review every three years, or, in light of any changes to national standards or Trust policy

1. Introduction

This policy provides basic instructions for the safe handling, use and transportation of oxygen within the practice. In all cases, members of staff who will be handling oxygen are to be familiar with the supplier's instructions for the safe use and storage of oxygen equipment, and are to follow these whenever the equipment is used.

Members of staff not involved with the handling of the equipment are to be familiar with the sections of the supplier's instructions dealing with safe storage. This policy is not designed as a substitute for those procedures.

Oxygen may be contained within large cylinders for therapeutic use and / or may be in smaller cylinders contained within emergency bags, response kits etc.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

All Clinical Staff involved directly and indirectly in health care provision are responsible for ensuring the following:

- Use medical gases in a safe and effective manner in accordance with their intended use.
- Maintain ongoing records of their training in relation to the Medical Gases Pipeline Systems (MGPS) within their personal development portfolio
- Report any concerns relating to the safe usage of medical gas to their line manager.
- Decline to use or operate any medical gas system which they have not been adequately trained to use and/or do not feel competent and confident to operate
- Oxygen may be used in an emergency without a pre-existing prescription. The administration of oxygen must be documented in the patient's notes immediately after the incident. Nurses and health care professionals must be trained in the administration of oxygen in such situations.

3. Hazard Control

Oxygen supports combustion. Oxygen enrichment of the air can arise unless good handling practices are used. Enrichment of the air by even a small amount can significantly increase the risk of fire caused by heat, sparks, static electricity or other sources of ignition.

Oil and grease can ignite spontaneously in the presence of oxygen, and should not be used to lubricate oxygen equipment, valves etc. The use of handcreams and lubricants of any kind are to be avoided when handling cylinders. No sealant, tape or other means which has not been provided as part of original equipment is to be used. Smoking is forbidden in areas where oxygen is used or stored. Storage areas must display *No Smoking / Naked Flame* signage and signs must be posted to indicate that oxygen is stored. Oxygen must not be stored behind a locked door, although doors secured by an electronic fob are permitted.

In the event of a significant escape of oxygen electrical supplies should be isolated at the main supply and potential sources of ignition removed.

In the event of an oxygen fire the use of extinguishers should be restricted to water, dry powder or CO₂. Cylinders may be sprayed with water to keep them cool.

Should a cylinder or item require attention or repair, this must only be carried out by the supplier service personnel.

All sites must keep a floor plan, marked with the location of stored oxygen, in their 'go bag'. This can be given to the emergency services in the event of an evacuation of the premises.

4. Maintenance

Oxygen cylinder(s) should be checked on a weekly basis as a minimum. A daily check is recommended. A designated person within the practice should be chosen to do this. There should also be a deputy in case of absence.

Equipment must be kept serviceable. Oxygen cylinders bear a label which includes the filling date and the expiry date. Any equipment that needs to be replaced should be done so promptly, ensuring that all necessary equipment is available at all times. The Nursing Lead or service lead must ensure that oxygen cylinders and equipment are rechecked following any emergency incident or use and that an adequate supply of oxygen is available at all times.

Remember – oxygen is dangerous in high concentrations and strongly supports combustion.

- Before checking cylinders, ensure your hands are clean
- If moisturisers or hand creams have been used, ensure hands are dry
- If alcohol-based gels or liquids (i.e. some anti-bacterial hand sanitisers) have recently been used, ensure it has totally evaporated before handling the cylinder
- Check there is no hot equipment in the room
- Ensure that adequate stock levels are available and that a replacement policy is in place to replenish stock in a timely manner

5. Storage

Large cylinders should be stored upright in a well ventilated external secure area, and must be secured to prevent them from falling. Full cylinders will be separated from empty ones. All valves are to be closed (even on empty cylinders). Cylinders are only to be moved by delivery personnel.

Small cylinders (e.g. in emergency bags) may be stored indoors, horizontally if necessary, however they should be returned to an upright position as soon as possible prior to use.

A medical gas/oxygen sticker must be displayed on the door of the room where oxygen is stored.

6. Transportation

Cylinders may be carried within cars subject to the following conditions:

- Only small cylinders for emergency use will be permitted in cars
- While not in use, all valves will be firmly closed and attachments removed
- The cylinders must at all times remain secured and within the transportation bags supplied, in order to prevent damage and movement
- Cylinders will not be used within a car, and must be removed outside if this is to take place
- No smoking is permitted in cars whilst oxygen is being carried
- In the event of a suspected leak, the engine is to be stopped and all doors and windows opened to increase ventilation
- Cylinders will not be left in cars where temperatures are likely to be excessive (e.g. in the summer sun)
- A risk assessment hazard data sheet provided by the oxygen supplier is to be kept in the car at all times to be made available to the emergency service in the event of an accident or incident.

7. References

[Transporting oxygen cylinders - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/transporting-oxygen-cylinders)

[Commercial and private carriage of oxygen cylinders by road: guidance note number 9 \(revision 1\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/commercial-and-private-carriage-of-oxygen-cylinders-by-road-guidance-note-number-9-revision-1)

[Travelling with oxygen | BOC Home Oxygen Service](https://www.boc.co.uk/home-oxygen-service)