

Pulse Oximetry at Discharge Education Plan

By the time I leave the hospital I will be able to show or tell staff:

1. How I use my pulse oximeter.
2. How often I should use my pulse oximeter.
3. Why I am checking my pulse oximeter value.
4. What I need to do about my pulse oximeter value.

The staff will use three questions to teach me about pulse oximeter:

1. What is my main problem?
2. Why I need to do this?
3. Why is this important to me?

The staff will ask me to repeat back important points in my own words, or ask me to show what I have learned. They want to make sure that I know:

- Why I need to check my oxygen levels with my Pulse Oximeter.
- How it can help guide my care.

What is my main problem?

If you are having breathing or lung problems, your blood oxygen level may be lower than normal. This is important to know. When your oxygen level is low, the cells in your body have a hard time working. If your oxygen level is low, you may need to use extra oxygen. Or you may need to contact your medical provider.

What do I need to do?

Pulse oximeters are medical devices that use infrared light to measure how much oxygen is in your blood. The device is a clip that covers the tip of your finger. Pulse oximeters measure your oxygen level and your heart rate. The device must be put on properly and used on fingers with good circulation.



How to use

1. Sit in a comfortable position.
2. Your hands should be clean and warm.

3. Remove any nail polish, artificial nails, bandages or anything else covering your nails.
4. Squeeze the pulse oximeter open.
5. Slide your forefinger or middle finger from either hand as far in as it will go.
6. Some pulse oximeters will turn on right away, others you will need to push the ON button.
7. Try to keep your hand relaxed and still while the pulse oximeter is checking your oxygen level. There may be a small light or bar that flashes every time your heart beats.
8. After about 1 minute record your oxygen level. The larger number is the oxygen level, the other number is your heart rate.
9. Remove the pulse oximeter from your finger.

If the numbers do not show:

- Make sure that your finger is all the way inside the oximeter.
- Try another finger if still not reading.
- Ensure the finger is warm
- Do not clench your fist
- Keep your hand still.

Cleaning your pulse oximeter

Do not get the pulse oximeter wet. Wipe with a small alcohol wipe. Do not use any other cleaning wipes as they may damage the digital display.

How do I use the results?

The maximum oxygen level is 100%. Levels between 88% - 100% can be normal, depending on your lung condition. **Your care team will advise you what pulse oximetry levels are right for you.** If your reading is lower than the level prescribed, **contact your care team:**

- Make sure you are sitting and resting in a comfortable position. Loosen any tight clothing. Let someone in your home know that your oxygen level is lower.

- If you have been told to use your oxygen, to take any medicines or to perform any breathing exercises, do that now.
- If you are very short of breath, feel dizzy, have chest pain or feel very unwell, call 911.

Why is this important to me?

Using your Pulse Oximeter will allow you to check your blood oxygen level and know when you need to contact your care team. Ask your healthcare provider what oxygen number(s) they want you to maintain.

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References:

Am J Respir Crit Care Med Vol. 184, P1, 2011

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Approved by: Patient Education Council

Authored by: Kim Leonard, BS, RRT-NPS, RN

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