



Breathing easier at home

by Josie Padro

It's good news that those who need oxygen therapy can receive it in their home and can venture out into the community with their oxygen tank in tow.

Oxygen is prescribed just like any medication or treatment and given to those need higher levels of oxygen than is present in room air. It is prescribed by flow rate, usually litres per minute, and for the number of hours per day it will be needed. Emphysema, pulmonary fibrosis, or chronic heart failure are some examples of conditions that may result in a need for oxygen therapy.

To qualify for the Home Oxygen Program, clients must be referred by a physician or nurse practitioner. Once someone has been admitted to the program, an oxygen therapist will visit the home to set up the equipment and to teach the patient and their caregiver how to use the equipment. The Home Oxygen Program will then schedule a follow-up appointment roughly a month later to make sure the oxygen and equipment are being used correctly.

Oxygen is delivered to the home by a company that will also provide the equipment needed to deliver the oxygen, such as nasal prongs. They will show clients how to use the equipment and ensure that it stays in working order. They can also supply portable oxygen in smaller tanks that can be rolled along or attached to wheelchairs.

Points to remember

- Make sure you have an adequate supply to last until your next scheduled delivery; there is usually a charge for extra deliveries.
- Never smoke near your oxygen tank. Oxygen is extremely combustible and if it's exposed to an source of ignition it can cause a fire.
- Store oxygen canisters well away from gas stoves, fireplaces or any open flame.
- Use a disposable razor rather than an electric razor if you shave while the oxygen is on.
- Make sure you have working smoke detectors in your home.