

OXYGEN THERAPY & TRAVEL

About 1.5 million people in the United States living with chronic lung or heart disease require supplemental oxygen to stay healthy and prevent symptom exacerbation.ⁱ With recent COVID-19 travel restrictions lifted, many people are choosing to travel again, including those who utilize supplemental oxygen.

While it may seem challenging, with the correct planning and preparation, traveling with your portable oxygen can be easy and stress free.



Before You Travel

As with most recommendations concerning chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) management, it is important to contact your healthcare provider to inform them of your upcoming travel plans. This discussion can help you understand how to safely travel and ensure you have the correct medical support.

*In this conversation, you can ask your doctor:*ⁱⁱ

- For a letter authorizing your supplemental oxygen use,
- What supplies you may need to travel,
- If you should bring emergency medication, and
- What to do if you experience exacerbated symptoms while you are travelling.

Before your trip, you should also ensure you have refilled prescriptions for your additional medications as well as your supplemental oxygen. You may also research suppliers of supplemental oxygen at your destination to ensure access to additional oxygen if needed.ⁱⁱ



Mode of Travel

Your mode of travel is an important consideration in planning for your trip.



Plane: If you are traveling by plane, liquid oxygen tanks are not allowed on flights. To travel by plane with supplemental oxygen you must use a Portable Oxygen Concentrator (POC). Many of these devices are approved by airline companies and can be found on their websites.ⁱⁱ Be sure to check with your airline's pre-approved POC list in advance of your travel.

You should also keep an eye on the charge of your device to ensure it will have sufficient battery life for the flight and to accommodate any unforeseen delays. If your flight is delayed, make sure to plug in your device for extra charge while you are waiting as there may not be in-flight charging.ⁱⁱⁱ



Car: For car travel, you may use liquid oxygen tanks as well as POCs. It is important to remember to never leave your supplemental oxygen devices inside of your vehicle unattended as varying temperatures can harm your device.ⁱⁱ Additionally, make sure your device is properly secured while driving to prevent damage.



Cruise: If you are planning to go on a cruise, it is important to communicate directly with the supplier of your supplemental oxygen tank or POC.ⁱⁱ The supplier must be able to support cruise ship travel to ensure you can get the additional oxygen you may need for your trip.^{iv}



Beyond these guidelines, be sure to contact the airline or travel company to discuss your options and adhere to their requirements. For international travel, contact your accommodations and the travel company. This is to ensure you follow supplemental oxygen laws in the country you are visiting and to know how you can get additional oxygen abroad if needed.

For other modes of transportation, visit the CHEST Foundation website and the National Council on Aging for further guidelines. ^v

Happy travels!

- i. **Oxygen: Advocating For Yourself. (2022).** www.thoracic.org.
- ii. **Trip Planning Guide: Traveling With Oxygen Therapy.** (n.d.). Retrieved September 26, 2023, from https://foundation.chestnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Travel_Guide_single.pdf
- iii. **United Airlines. (2022).** Traveling with oxygen. United. <https://www.united.com/en/us/fly/travel/accessibility-and-assistance/oxygen.html>
- iv. **Oxygen: Advocating For Yourself. (2022).** Wwww.thoracic.org. <https://www.thoracic.org/patients/lung-disease-week/2022/oxygen-week/#:~:text=Supplemental%20oxygen%20is%20a%20treatmen>
- v. **Best Portable Oxygen Concentrators: Cost & Features. (n.d).** National Council on Aging. Retrieved September 26, 2023, from <https://www.ncoa.org/adviser/oxygen-machines/best-portable-oxygen-concentrators/>