

Lessons Learned – 15 Years on and off Oxygen

A Testimonial

If you are currently on oxygen prescribed by your doctor for such illnesses as COPD or emphysema, this testimonial is for you. Perhaps you will benefit from my experiences or at least avoid some of the mistakes I made.

At the onset I want to clearly state that I encourage you to follow your doctor's orders. If after reading of my experiences, you feel prompted to amend or change your prescribed treatment program, you should only do so after consulting with your doctor. My sole purpose is to share my story with you in the hope that you find it encouraging and helpful.

Hi, I'm Ken M and I am 81 years old. I was diagnosed with severe COPD and emphysema some 15 years ago. I was treated on an outpatient basis and told to use an oxygen canister set at 2 liters whenever I went out and/or did any exercise. Also, I was prescribed an array of "puffers" (inhalers of all types) and put on 5 mg of prednisone. That's how my "saga" with oxygen began. From the beginning, I resented having to push the oxygen canister around. It was inconvenient and cumbersome. Also, I noticed a tendency on my part to use this as an excuse to reduce outdoor physical activity, particularly walking. (Mistake #1). In a book store one day, I noticed a book that advocated a reduced breathing system that would if not cure at least improve the body's ability to cope with COPD and emphysema symptoms. What really got my attention was the implication in the book that oxygen was plentiful except in extreme situations such as high altitudes and the problem instead was with the body maintaining CO2 levels. The solution suggested for the latter was mainly that of training the body to adjust to reduced shallow breathing. The points made in the book intrigued me and I made contact with the author. Within a month, I was involved helping the author recruit for the workshops that were then being conducted throughout the states. I stopped using supplemental oxygen entirely. (Mistake #2).

About two years later, I had a heart attack. Because of complications, I was in the hospital for almost one year recovering. All during this hospital stay I was on oxygen 24/7. I remained on oxygen upon discharge. In fact, my usage, on doctors orders, soon went up to 4 liters 24/7. So I remained, bedridden, for the next 4 years. While bedridden, I did not exercise at all nor did I attempt to do so. (Mistake #3) My entire muscular system atrophied.(still dealing with that). Also, I gained a lot of weight.

I was readmitted to the hospital for breathing complications about two years ago. I stayed only briefly and then was transferred to a nursing home. At the nursing home I tried to make up for my past slackness and diligently exercised at every opportunity. The result was that my blood oxygen levels improved to the point that my doctor approved my request to reduce my oxygen supplement to 2 liters at night time.

I was released to my home about a year and a half ago. I dabbled for several months with the reduced breathing method I discussed earlier and then became disillusioned again for reasons not important to share here. Then about a month ago, the county nurse came by on her quarterly visit. My blood pressure had gone up 30 points since her last visit. Alarmed, and not feeling well, I started to reexamine my options. And, EUREKA, I stumbled on to breathing.com. After years of searching, false starts, mistakes, endless "rabbit trails," I found a source that for me makes perfect sense. Since discovery, I have ravenously devoured the information on the site and began doing the techniques and exercises suggested in the Optimal Breathing Kit.

I conclude:

I need and now use supplemental oxygen for my emphysema and COPD. I have a portable concentrator set at 2 liters that I use in my home. My oxygen levels range in the low to high 90s; When I go out on short daily excursions, I usually do not need supplemental oxygen since I can, if necessary, raise my oxygen level to above 90 by lung exercises taught in the kit.

I must exercise physically (mainly walking) daily. To stay within safe limits while exercising, I do frequent checks on my pulse/oximeter. Almost every person who exercises and certainly those with emphysema and/or COPD should own a pulse/oximeter and have it readily available to monitor reaction to physical activity, exercise and rest.

While supplemental oxygen is important for persons with emphysema/COPD, if not combined with physical exercise and correct breathing the individual will likely have low energy and quite possibly a chalky pallor indicating poor absorption of the oxygen.

What I eat/drink is highly influential in how I cope or not cope on a daily basis with my emphysema/COPD. (I don't follow a specific diet however about a year ago, I became a vegetarian – I went from 220 lbs in the nursing home to a current 180 lbs without trying to diet. I drink a lot of water).

I feel better then I have for a long time. And most importantly, I know many more positives await me. My attitude is one of high optimism. Ken M, Florida