

A stylized map of the United States in shades of teal and blue, with white outlines for state boundaries. The map is centered on the continent, with the title text overlaid on the right side.

Trip Planning Guide: Traveling With Oxygen Therapy



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Before you travel

Just because you need oxygen therapy doesn't mean you can't travel or spend extended time away from your primary home. Here are some tips to make sure you can travel safely while still getting the oxygen therapy you need.

Talk to your health care provider

Before you start planning a trip, make an appointment with your health care provider to make sure it's safe for you to travel. During that appointment, talk to your healthcare provider about:

- How you'll be traveling—car, plane, train, or cruise ship;
- How long you'll be gone;
- What the climate and elevation will be at your destination or during your journey;
- Whether you'll need extra supplies for your oxygen therapy system while you're away;
- Whether you'll need emergency medication, such as corticosteroids or inhalers;
- The names of health care providers, hospitals, and durable medical equipment (DME) suppliers at your destination;
- What medical, insurance, and personal information you should take with you;
- What you should do if you have trouble breathing while you're away;

- A letter authorizing you to travel with an oxygen therapy system; and
- Copy of your oxygen therapy prescription.

Plan for your trip

After you've talked to your health care provider, put together information you'll need in a folder. This folder should contain:

- Names and phone numbers of important contacts, such as your health care provider and people to call in case of emergency;
- Important health insurance information, including all up-to-date insurance cards;
- DME supplier locations at your destination
- The names and numbers of local health care providers and hospitals at your destination; and
- A list of all the medications you take.

Before you leave for your trip, be sure to refill all your prescription medications. If you're traveling alone, arrange to check in with a friend or family member regularly so that that person knows you're alright. If you're traveling with someone, make sure that person knows the medication you take and how to use your portable oxygen therapy system, including how to recharge or change the batteries.

Make sure your oxygen needs are met while you're traveling

Before you leave for your trip, create a plan to meet your oxygen needs while you're away. Work with your DME supplier to make sure you have a portable oxygen therapy system and extra accessories, such as nasal cannulas and tubing, for the whole time you'll be away.

Most DME suppliers require some time to coordinate the oxygen equipment for travel. You should provide a minimum of 2-4 weeks' notice to your DME supplier and share the details of your travel plans, including dates, location, and type of oxygen equipment needs that will be necessary for you to travel safely.

When you and your DME supplier have a plan, write the plan details down, and email or speak with your supplier so all are aware of your travel plans and needed accommodations.

If your DME supplier is part of a national chain, ask for the contact information of a local office. Then, contact that office at least one to two weeks before you arrive to make sure everything is in place or ready to go when you get there. If your DME supplier is independent, work with your contact person to find a local supplier in your destination city 2-3 weeks before your arrival. If you'll be staying at a resort or hotel, let the concierge know that oxygen and oxygen supplies will be delivered to your room and that it's OK to sign for them.

Traveling by car



Traveling by car

If you plan to drive to your destination, you should take these steps:

- Plan the route you'll take in advance, including rest stops.
- If you are using a Portable Oxygen Concentrator, refer to your POC manufacturer manual to verify whether your POC will charge while running.
- Check your mobile phone provider's coverage map to make sure you'll have mobile phone access along your planned route in case of emergency—for example:
 - Sprint: <https://coverage.sprint.com/IMPACT.jsp?>
 - T-Mobile: <https://maps.t-mobile.com>
 - AT&T: <https://www.att.com/maps/wireless-coverage.html>
 - Verizon: <https://www.whistleout.com/CellPhones/Guides/verizon-coverage-map>
- If your car has a 12-volt DC outlet and you use a portable oxygen concentrator (POC), you should be able to charge the POC as you travel. If not, you'll need to know where

If your vehicle doesn't have a 12-volt DC outlet, talk to your mechanic or the vehicle manufacturer about modifying your car's electrical system (for example, the car's battery and alternator) so that you can use your car to recharge your POC's battery. Be aware that neither Medicare nor your insurance company will pay for this modification.

you can stop to recharge your POC along the way.

- If you use any portable oxygen tank, make sure you bring along more tanks than you'll need for the drive. Secure the tanks in the vehicle, and don't store them where they'll get hot, such as in the trunk or in the bed of a pickup.
- Liquid oxygen is not recommended for long-term travel because availability may be limited; liquid oxygen is more appropriate for local travel.
- Be aware that liquid oxygen will evaporate over time, even when not in use.
- If you're driving to or through high-altitude areas, be aware that high altitude means less oxygen in the air. So, plan to use more oxygen in these areas.



Traveling by bus



Traveling by bus

Before traveling by bus, you should take the following steps:

- Contact the coach operator (for example, Greyhound) to make sure you understand its rules and policies for traveling with oxygen.
- Carry a copy of your oxygen therapy prescription with you during travel. You may even want to ask your health care provider for a note explaining why you have oxygen.
- If you use portable oxygen tanks, make sure you bring extra tanks. Be aware, however, that coach lines may limit the number of tanks you're allowed to bring.
- If you use a POC, ask the coach line if you're allowed to recharge your POC on the bus. If you are, try to book a seat near a 12-volt DC outlet. If you aren't, be sure to bring enough extra batteries to get you to your destination (recommend 1.5 times the travel time), and know where and when the bus will stop so that you can recharge your POC during these breaks.

Traveling by train



Traveling by train

Traveling by train with oxygen is probably the easiest travel option. In the United States, Amtrak has the following restrictions:

- When you travel with oxygen, you can't book your trip on the Amtrak website. Instead, call 1-800-USA-RAIL (1-800-872-7245), and let the operator know that you will be traveling with oxygen. Make your reservation well in advance of the date you plan to travel.
- If you're traveling with a POC, it must be able to run on battery power for 4 hours.
- If you're traveling with liquid oxygen tanks, you're limited to two 50-pound tanks or six 20-pound tanks.
- All oxygen therapy system equipment must be Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) or Factory Mutual (FM) listed.

If you're traveling on a rail service other than Amtrak, call the rail company directly to make your reservation and learn about any restrictions or requirements.

Traveling by cruise ship



Traveling by cruise ship

If you're planning a cruise, contact the cruise line well in advance of your trip. Many cruise lines must approve your plans before you can bring oxygen equipment aboard the ship. Most cruise lines will not work with DME suppliers directly: You must make arrangements with the supplier yourself to deliver oxygen to the cruise ship. Contact your oxygen supplier to see if they can support Cruise Ship Travel.



Traveling by plane

Traveling by plane

If you'll be flying in the United States, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) allows you to use a battery-powered POC during the flight. Each airline keeps a list of approved POCs, so you'll need to check the list for your chosen airline or talk to an airline agent to make sure you're allowed to use your POC. If your POC isn't on the airline's list, ask the airline agent if the airline will supply you with oxygen during the flight. (Many do for an additional fee.) Otherwise, you can rent an approved system for the flight. Talk to your DME supplier if you'll need to rent a POC.

Check your airline's requirement for battery life on your POC. Based on your flight time, you will need 1.5 times battery life to compensate for any potential delay.

Most airlines have a special form that your health care provider must fill out before your trip. You may need to present this form when you check in for your flight.

Also, take advantage of electrical outlets in airports to keep your POC fully charged.

Important

FAA doesn't allow liquid oxygen tanks on flights in the United States. For more information about FAA-approved POCs, visit the FAA website at https://www.faa.gov/about/initiatives/cabin_safety/portable_oxygen.

The following list provides phone numbers and websites for some of the major airlines in the United States:

- American Airlines: (800) 433-7300 or <https://www.aa.com/i18n/travel-info/special-assistance/special-assistance.jsp>
- Delta: (404) 209-3434 or <https://www.delta.com/us/en/accessible-travel-services/overview>
- Frontier Airlines: (801) 401-9004 or <https://www.flyfrontier.com/travel/travel-info/special-services>
- Southwest Airlines: (800) I-FLY-SWA (or 800-435-9792) or <https://www.southwest.com/html/customer-service/unique-travel-needs/customers-with-disabilities-pol.html?clk=GFOOTER-CUSTOMER-ASSISTANCE>
- Sun Country: (651) 905-2737 or <https://www.suncountry.com/contact-us/accessibility-requests>
- United Airlines: <https://www.united.com/ual/en/us/fly/travel/special-needs.html>

Traveling outside the United States

Laws governing oxygen use vary from country to country. If you'll be traveling outside the United States, work with your travel agent, airline, rail service, local hotel or resort, or the US Department of State to make sure your oxygen therapy system meets the requirements and laws of the country you're traveling in or through. For example, the State Department has a helpful website for people with disabilities traveling abroad:

- Travelers with disabilities: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-with-special-considerations/traveling-with-disabilities.html>

Note: Medicare does not cover oxygen outside of United



States. You will also need to contact your oxygen supplier to see if they allow their equipment to be taken out of the United States.

The following websites may be helpful, as well:

- Mobility International USA: <https://www.miusa.org>
- Cruise Critic: <https://www.cruisecritic.com/cruisestyles/area.cfm?area=30>
- DisabledTravelers.com: <http://www.executiveclasstravelers.com/>
- Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality: <http://www.sath.org>
- European Network for Accessible Tourism: <https://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.accessible-cities>

It is possible to travel with oxygen therapy. With proper planning, you can have a great trip!



