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Oxygen Humidifier

Purpose

The purpose of an oxygen humidifier is to add moisture to prescribed oxygen. This prevents the drying of mucous membranes and provides added nasal comfort. Humidifiers are only supplied for individuals that are being treated with prescribed oxygen. The oxygen being supplied to you is in conjunction with the prescription obtained from your physician.

Types

Oxygen humidifiers come in two types: pre-filled and non-pre-filled. This information sheet will discuss the non-pre-filled type. The non-pre-filled type of oxygen humidifier is the most commonly used humidifier in the home. A humidifier is a container that you fill with *distilled* water that attaches to your oxygen system.

Use

The most important part of using a humidifier is to understand your oxygen prescription and use the oxygen only as prescribed by your physician. Do not deviate from your prescription without first contacting your physician and then contacting your oxygen supplier. Too much oxygen can be harmful.

Oxygen humidifiers connect at the oxygen source and the oxygen delivery device (most commonly a nasal cannula) attaches directly to the humidifier. The *distilled* water contents should always be between the minimum and maximum fill markings.

When your humidifier is working you will see the water bubbling. Humidifiers are only used when the oxygen flow is low to moderate. Fast oxygen flowrates cause the water in the humidifier to bubble into the oxygen delivery tubing.

Safety

The safe use of an oxygen humidifier requires it to be used as instructed, which includes the following safety precautions:

- Ensure that you follow all oxygen use and safety precautions provided to you by your oxygen supplier.
- Ensure that oxygen delivery tubing is routed and secured so that it does not become entangled and/or damaged.
- Do not over fill the humidifier.
- Clean the humidifier daily.
- Only use *distilled* water to fill the humidifier.
- Discard the humidifier if any part becomes discolored.
- Check tubing for kinks if the pressure-relief valve on the humidifier is activated.
- Always wash your hands prior to handling the humidifier.

Cleaning & Maintenance

In order to prevent contamination of the water in your humidifier, you must empty, rinse, and refill it everyday. Your oxygen supplier should provide you with two humidifiers so you can be cleaning one humidifier while using the other. When filling a clean humidifier do not touch the inside surfaces of the humidifier and fill to the maximum fill line with *distilled* water. Cleaning instructions for your humidifier include the following:

1. Wash your hands.
2. Turn off the oxygen flow and remove the humidifier.
3. Replace the humidifier with a clean, full humidifier.
4. Turn the oxygen flow back on.
5. Empty the contents of the humidifier that has just been removed.
6. Disassemble the humidifier.
7. Wash all items in hot water with dishwashing soap.
8. Rinse under hot tap water for at least 30 seconds to remove soap residue.
9. Using a clean container or bowl, soak the humidifier in a medical bacterial-germicidal disinfectant available through your oxygen provider for 30 minutes.
10. Make sure all parts are submerged.
11. With clean hands, remove items from the disinfecting solution.
12. Rinse under hot tap water for at least 30 seconds.
13. Place upside down on a clean paper towel and allow to air dry.
14. Once all the pieces are dry, they can be reassembled.
15. Once dry, place the humidifier in a *new* re-sealable plastic bag.

Always make sure you have an alternate humidifier to use in case yours needs to be replaced. When you only have one functional humidifier, call your oxygen supplier for new supplies.

To prevent possible risk of infection from contaminated cleaning solutions, always prepare fresh disinfecting solution for each cleaning cycle and discard solution after each use.