

That's the Ticket

Traveling with portable oxygen by land, air, and sea



It's often hard to find time to breathe when you're getting ready for a trip, but it should be your No. 1 priority if you're dependent on oxygen. Fortunately, you can travel almost anywhere with a portable oxygen concentrator (POC), provided you plan ahead.

If you need some help, find a travel agent who specializes in trip planning for travelers with special needs. This guide covers some basic tips for oxygen travel, but you should contact your travel provider's special services or medical department to get their specific requirements ahead of time.

On the road

In your own car, you can easily power your POC using a DC adapter. If traveling by bus, give at least 48 hours notice, and if you're planning to catch the train, provide a minimum of 12 hours notice.

Oxygen equipment, including oxygen concentrators, cannot rely

solely on train-provided electrical power, according to Amtrak. Any device brought on a train must be able to operate a minimum of four hours without available onboard electrical power.

Up in the air

Provide the airline with a physician's statement specifying your oxygen needs. It should describe your medical necessity for oxygen during all or only portions of the flight, your flow rates, your ability to understand and respond to device alarms, and the POC's model name or number.

Be sure your POC meets the airline's requirements and is approved by the Federal Aviation Administration. (See box.) Call the airlines at least 48 hours prior to departure, ask if they offer seats near a power outlet, and pack extra batteries in your carry-on bag along with power adapters.

Allow extra time for security and the flight crew to screen your POC. On the plane, use your POC in accordance with the directions in your physician's statement. Turn off and properly stow your POC during unauthorized times.

CLEARED FOR TAKE-OFF

The FAA has approved the following POCs for in-flight use:

- AirSep FreeStyle
- AirSep LifeStyle
- Delphi RS-00400
- DeVilbiss iGo
- IBC Lifechoice
- Inogen One G2
- Invacare XPO2
- OxLife Independence
- Respironics EverGo
- Sequal Eclipse

Out at sea

If you're heading for the high seas, make sure to get approval from your cruise line four to six weeks in advance. Bring a letter from your physician that states your needs, a brief medical history, and approval for travel. You'll provide your own oxygen equipment so find out if it must follow any specific rules.

You can plug your POC into an outlet in your cabin, relying on battery power for activities outside of your room. Ask the cruise line to identify electrical outlets in the ship's dining and entertainment areas so you can save on battery power.

If you keep these tips in mind, your next getaway will be smooth sailing. ■

Information adapted from the National Railroad Passenger Corp., Federal Aviation Administration, Greyhound Lines Inc., and Breathin' Easy.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Your doctor or therapist has given you this patient education handout to further explain or remind you about an issue related to your health. It is a general guide only. If you have specific questions, discuss them with your doctor or therapist.
