LeadingAge Midwest
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**Oxygen Equipment Use, Care and Maintenance**

Nursing home deficiencies are frequently cited under F695 related to the failure to appropriately change oxygen tubing or other respiratory equipment. This often leads to the question, what is the recommended frequency for changing oxygen tubing? Ultimately you should review the recommendations from the oxygen equipment manufacturer but if you need instructions please use this resource from the University of Maryland Medical System.

Oxygen Mask, Cannulas, and Tubing

The nasal cannula and tubing should not be cleaned. If the oxygen supplier does not provide adequate supplies to routinely change the equipment, you should request extra supplies. Ideally, the tubing should be replaced every 1-2 weeks. While the resource document does not include this, it is important that the oxygen equipment that is placed on the patient's face does not touch the floor. You should have some type of storage such as a Ziplock bag or similar device that the equipment can be stored in when not in use.

Maintaining Oxygen Concentrators

If you use humidification with the oxygen concentrator, determine whether the device is reusable or disposal. A reusable humidifier should:

- Be cleaned routinely with soap and warm water whenever it is refilled.
- Only filled with distilled water.
- Use a mixture of 3 parts white vinegar and 1 part water once a week. The bottle should soak in the mixture for 20 minutes, rinsed well, and then air dry.
- The bottle should be replaced monthly.

The oxygen concentrator should be maintained weekly including:

- Washing the air filters and allowing them to air dry. The medical equipment technician can demonstrate how to install and remove them.
- Wipe the unit with a damp cloth.
- Filters should be replaced monthly. *Note if you use a company to provide oxygen concentrators you should likely check with them to identify if you should replace the filters or if that is something they will do as part of their service.

Portable Oxygen:

A portable oxygen concentrator is a small battery-operated machine that provides pulses of oxygen when the person takes a breath instead of continuous oxygen flow. These should be maintained by:

- Using a damp cloth to wipe down the portable oxygen concentrator weekly.
- Since it comes in many different styles, the equipment technician should demonstrate how to remove, clean, and reinstall the filter along with how and when to replace the filters.

If you're using metal oxygen tanks, they typically need to be returned to the supplier to be refilled. If the tank is refilled at the nursing home, the medical equipment technician should demonstrate how to care for and refill the tank.

Essential Rules for Oxygen Use:

- Tanks should always be maintained in a secure and upright position.
- Aerosols, oils, hairspray, oil-based lip balms or rubs, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be avoided when using oxygen.
- Ensure that your fire alarm system is functioning appropriately and follow the life safety code requirements:
    - Combustible materials should not be stored within 5 feet of oxygen cylinders.
    - Full oxygen cylinders should be stored separately from empty.
    - Oxygen concentrators should not be left on and unattended.
    - Keep all oxygen equipment at least 10 feet away from heat or flames. This includes cigarettes, e-cigarettes, gas stoves, and handheld appliances that may heat up such as a blow dryer or electric razor.
    - If there is a power outage ensure that you have backup power or emergency cylinders to ensure continuous oxygen use.