

[National Institutes of Health](#) / [U.S. National Library of Medicine](#)



[Home](#) → [Medical Encyclopedia](#) → Hyperbaric oxygen therapy

URL of this page: [//medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002375.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002375.htm)

Hyperbaric oxygen therapy

Hyperbaric oxygen therapy uses a special pressure chamber to increase the amount of oxygen in the blood.

Information

Some hospitals have a hyperbaric chamber. Smaller units may be available in outpatient centers.

The air pressure inside a hyperbaric oxygen chamber is about two and a half times higher than the normal pressure in the atmosphere. This helps your blood carry more oxygen to organs and tissues in your body.

Hyperbaric therapy can help wounds, especially infected wounds, heal more quickly. The therapy may be used to treat:

- Air or gas embolism
- Bone infections (osteomyelitis) that have not improved with other treatments
- Burns
- Carbon monoxide poisoning
- Certain types of brain or sinus infections
- Decompression sickness (for example, a diving injury)
- Gas gangrene
- Necrotizing soft tissue infections
- Radiation injury (for example, damage from radiation therapy for cancer)
- Skin grafts
- Wounds that have not healed with other treatments (for example, it may be used to treat a foot ulcer in someone with diabetes or very bad circulation)

This treatment may also be used to provide enough oxygen to the lung during a procedure called whole lung lavage, which is used to clean an entire lung in people with certain medical conditions.

Treatment for chronic conditions may be repeated over days or weeks. A treatment session for more acute conditions such as decompression sickness may last longer, but may not need to be repeated.

You might feel pressure in your ears while you are in the hyperbaric chamber. Your ears may pop when you get out of the chamber.

References

Carnay AY. Hyperbaric oxygen therapy, an introduction. *Crit Care Nurs Q.* 2013;36(3):274–279.

PMID: 23736666

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23736666 [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23736666>].

Torp KD, Feinglass NG, Shine TSJ. Hyperbaric oxygen therapy. In: Murray MJ, Harrison BA, Mueller JT, Rose SH, Wass CT, Wedel DJ, eds. *Faust's Anesthesiology Review*. 4th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier Saunders; 2015:chap 224.

Review Date 8/22/2016

Updated by: Laura J. Martin, MD, MPH, ABIM Board Certified in Internal Medicine and Hospice and Palliative Medicine, Atlanta, GA. Also reviewed by David Zieve, MD, MHA, Isla Ogilvie, PhD, and the A.D.A.M. Editorial team.



A.D.A.M., Inc. is accredited by URAC, also known as the American Accreditation HealthCare Commission (www.urac.org).

URAC's [accreditation program](#) is an independent audit to verify that A.D.A.M. follows rigorous standards of quality and accountability. A.D.A.M. is among the first to achieve this important distinction for online health information and services. Learn more about A.D.A.M.'s [editorial policy](#), [editorial process](#) and [privacy policy](#). A.D.A.M. is also a founding

member of Hi-Ethics and subscribes to the principles of the Health on the Net Foundation (www.hon.ch).

The information provided herein should not be used during any medical emergency or for the diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. A licensed physician should be consulted for diagnosis and treatment of any and all medical conditions. Call 911 for all medical emergencies. Links to other sites are provided for information only -- they do not constitute endorsements of those other sites. Copyright 1997–2017, A.D.A.M., Inc. Duplication for commercial use must be authorized in writing by ADAM Health Solutions.



U.S. National Library of Medicine 8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20894
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Institutes of Health

Page last updated: 21 December 2017