

correct hypoxaemia in order to prevent development of any associated oxygen toxicity, including increased carbon dioxide retention. High concentrations of oxygen should be used in carbon monoxide poisoning and, in selected patients, treatment with hyperbaric oxygen considered.

In respiratory failure associated with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (conditions such as chronic bronchitis and emphysema) oxygen is usually given initially at an inspired concentration of up to 28%. High concentrations are to be avoided as they may enhance carbon dioxide retention and narcosis.

Oxygen at a pressure greater than 1 atmosphere absolute, i.e. hyperbaric oxygen therapy (below), is given by enclosing the patient in a special high-pressure chamber. It may be used in carbon monoxide poisoning, as an adjunct in the treatment of severe anaerobic infections, especially gas gangrene, and for the treatment of decompression sickness and gas emboli.

#### General references.

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**Cluster headache.** Inhalation of 100% oxygen can provide rapid and effective treatment of cluster headache attacks (p.616) but practical difficulties associated with its use result in other drugs being preferred. It has been noted that the evidence of value is limited.

#### References.

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**Hyperbaric oxygen therapy.** The use of hyperbaric oxygen therapy, which involves the intermittent inhalation of 100% oxygen under a pressure of greater than 1 atmosphere in a specialised chamber, has been reviewed.<sup>1,3</sup> In the 1960s hyperbaric therapy was used for disorders such as *myocardial infarction, stroke, senility, and cancer* but clinical studies and experience have shown little benefit and enthusiasm has since waned. Hyperbaric oxygen therapy has also been tried in *multiple sclerosis* but there is little evidence of benefit. There are, however, other disorders for which the evidence supporting the efficacy of hyperbaric oxygen is much stronger.

Hyperbaric oxygen is a safe and effective primary therapy for *decompression sickness and air or gas embolism*. The effect is achieved through the mechanical reduction in bubble size in the blood brought about by an increase in ambient pressure; the increased oxygenation of blood due to the additional pressure used for these conditions (often 6 rather than 2 or 3 atmospheres) is also beneficial.

The role of hyperbaric oxygen therapy in *carbon monoxide poisoning* is unclear but it should be considered in selected patients (see p.1688). Its mechanism of action is not fully understood; it increases the rate at which carboxyhaemoglobin concentrations decline, increases intracellular delivery of oxygen, and may also reduce lipid peroxidation and thus spare neuronal cell membranes.

Hyperbaric oxygen is used as adjunctive therapy in *clostridial infections (gas gangrene)* (p.171). Early treatment appears to reduce systemic toxic reactions (probably by inhibiting the production of alpha toxin by the anaerobic bacteria, *Clostridium*) thus enabling patients to tolerate surgery more readily; additionally there is a clearer demarcation of viable and nonviable tissue. *Necrotising fasciitis* (p.180) is another infection in which hyperbaric oxygen therapy may be useful.

There is some evidence that hyperbaric oxygen may be useful in other types of *wounds*. In an *acute crush injury* therapy may reduce oedema via vasoconstriction and reverse ischaemia by increased oxygen delivery. In *problem wounds*, including venous ulcers, therapy may increase the tissue oxygen tension and stimulate angiogenesis but it is emphasised that it is adjunctive therapy and not a replacement for meticulous local care. Hyper-

baric oxygen therapy might also reduce the risk of major amputation in patients with chronic *diabetic foot ulcer*.<sup>4,5</sup> Improved healing of leg ulcers has been reported<sup>6</sup> with use of hyperbaric oxygen therapy in patients with livedoid vasculopathy. Other wounds in which therapy may be beneficial include thermal burns and compromised skin grafts and flaps. The management of burns and wounds is described on p.1578 and p.1585, respectively.

**Radiation therapy** can damage normal adjacent tissue resulting in tissue hypoxia and eventual cell death. Hyperbaric oxygen therapy appears to aid in salvaging such tissue by stimulating angiogenesis in marginally viable tissue and has been demonstrated to be beneficial in osteoradionecrosis, radiation-induced haemorrhagic cystitis (p.2178), and other radiation-damaged soft tissue.<sup>7</sup>

There has been interest in the use of hyperbaric oxygen in children with *cerebral palsy*, although a randomised study<sup>8</sup> found that it was no better than pressurised air. However, improved neurological outcomes have been reported with hyperbaric oxygen therapy in neonates with hypoxic-ischaemic encephalopathy.<sup>9</sup>

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**Respiratory failure.** Respiratory failure occurs when the arterial plasma partial pressure of oxygen (P<sub>a</sub>O<sub>2</sub>) and of carbon dioxide (P<sub>a</sub>CO<sub>2</sub>) cannot be maintained within normal physiological limits.<sup>1</sup> Respiratory failure can be classified into 2 types, both of which are characterised by a low P<sub>a</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (hypoxaemia). However, in type I the P<sub>a</sub>CO<sub>2</sub> is normal or low whereas in type II, referred to as ventilatory failure, P<sub>a</sub>CO<sub>2</sub> is raised (hypercapnia). Some conditions, for example asthma, can produce either type of respiratory failure.

Management of respiratory failure mainly involves giving oxygen to reverse hypoxaemia, and specific therapy for any underlying condition. Respiratory stimulants may be considered in some situations.

In type I respiratory failure oxygen is used in high concentrations. Nasal prongs and certain face masks can provide concentrations of up to 60% but if concentrations higher than this are needed then tight-fitting anaesthetic-type masks or methods of delivery such as endotracheal intubation have to be used.

In type II respiratory failure both high and low concentrations are used according to need.

Patients with *acute severe asthma* (p.1108) should usually be given oxygen at high concentrations of 40 to 60%. In patients with exacerbations of chronic respiratory disorders such as *chronic obstructive pulmonary disease* (COPD, p.1112) the aim is to improve hypoxaemia without increasing hypercapnia and respiratory acidosis.<sup>2</sup> The initial concentration of oxygen to give in COPD exacerbations is controversial. During the transfer to hospital, UK guidelines<sup>3</sup> recommend starting at 40% and titrating upwards if the oxygen saturation falls below 90% and downwards if the patient becomes drowsy or if the saturation exceeds 93 to 94%. Special care is needed for patients with known type II respiratory failure, especially if they require a long ambulance journey or receive oxygen at home for a prolonged period before an ambulance arrives, as uncontrolled oxygen therapy can result in suppression of respiratory drive, carbon dioxide narcosis, and respiratory arrest. In hospital, arterial blood gases should be used to guide treatment. Other guidelines<sup>4</sup> consider that lower initial oxygen concentrations of 24 to 28% are usually sufficient. Patients with exacerbations of chronic ventilatory failure already have an increased central drive to the respiratory muscles and therefore respiratory stimulants such as doxapram have a limited role but may be indicated for short-term use if hypercapnia worsens as a result of oxygen. For most patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, non-invasive ventilation is the initial treatment of choice for hypercapnic ventilatory failure during exacerbations.<sup>5</sup> Respiratory stimulants may be considered in the management of *postanaesthetic hypoventilation*. Although

naloxone can reverse respiratory depression caused by opioid analgesics careful dosage adjustment is required as it can also abolish analgesia. Specific antagonists such as naloxone and flumazenil are also used to treat hypoventilation associated with opioid and benzodiazepine overdosage, respectively. If oxygen therapy fails to raise P<sub>a</sub>O<sub>2</sub> in respiratory failure and there is worsening hypercapnia and respiratory acidosis the use of artificial ventilation should be considered.

Severe respiratory failure in *neonates* may result from various disorders. Use of surfactant or inhaled nitric oxide may be of benefit in some cases but extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO), where blood is removed from the neonate, oxygenated, and re-injected in a continuous circuit that also removes carbon dioxide, may be required.<sup>2</sup> ECMO has also been used in older children and in adults,<sup>6</sup> but is less well established.

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**Wounds.** Hyperbaric oxygen therapy may have a role in the management of infected and problem wounds (see above). Supplemental normobaric oxygen has been tried in the prevention of postoperative wound infections, but results of controlled studies<sup>1–3</sup> have been contradictory and its role is not established.

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- Pryor KO, et al. Surgical site infection and the routine use of perioperative hypoxia in a general surgical population: a randomized controlled trial. *JAMA* 2004; **291**: 79–87.
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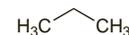
#### Preparations

**Proprietary Preparations** (details are given in Part 3)

**Multi-ingredient:** **Fr:** Kalinox; **Medimix**; **S.Afr.:** Entonox; **UK:** Entonox; **Equanox**.

#### Propane

Dimethylmethane; E944; Propano; Propyl Hydride.  
C<sub>3</sub>H<sub>8</sub> = 44.10.  
CAS — 74-98-6.



#### Pharmacopoeias. In USNF.

**USNF 26** (Propane). A colourless gas. It is highly flammable and explosive. Store in airtight cylinders at a temperature not exceeding 40°.

#### Profile

Propane is used as a refrigerant and as an aerosol propellant (p.1688). It is also widely used as a fuel.

♦ Reports of toxicity associated with the abuse or misuse of propane.<sup>1–6</sup>

- James NK, Moss ALH. Cold injury from liquid propane. *BMJ* 1989; **299**: 950–1.
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- Tsoukali H, et al. Death during deliberate propane inhalation. *Forensic Sci Int* 1998; **93**: 1–4.
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- Jackowski C, et al. Aortic accident by inhalation of propane-butane gas mixture. *Am J Forensic Med Pathol* 2005; **26**: 355–9.

#### Preparations

**Proprietary Preparations** (details are given in Part 3)

**Multi-ingredient:** **Austral.:** HistoFreezer†; **Fr.:** Cliptol Sport†; Freezer; HistoFreezer†; **Ger.:** Olibas; **It.:** Wartner; **Israel:** Wartner; **NZ:** Wartner; **UK:** HistoFreezer; **Wartner**; **USA:** Compound W Freeze Off.

