

Information for Patients and Families

Hypoxic Challenge Test (Flight Assessment)

A test required to determine if you need oxygen during air travel

This leaflet has been written to provide information about your Hypoxic Challenge Test. We hope it answers some of your questions or concerns you may have. It is not intended to replace talking with medical or clinical staff.

What is a Hypoxic Challenge Test?

Your consultant or General Practitioner (GP) has requested this test to help them assess any possible supplemental oxygen requirements that you may have during air travel. During air travel aircraft cabins have thinner air than the air at ground level. This means that there is less oxygen to breathe and that some people with lung conditions may experience a drop in their oxygen levels.

What does the test involve?

You will be asked to sit comfortably whilst we check your oxygen levels in your blood by taking a small blood sample from your earlobe. We then monitor your oxygen levels whilst you breathe a special mixture of air through a mask for 20 minutes. We repeat a blood sample to check whether your oxygen levels meet the recommendations for air travel. If your oxygen levels fall to below the recommended level you will be given some supplemental oxygen, and your oxygen levels are checked again.

How long will the test take?

Please allow 45 – 90 minutes for your appointment.

Is the test painful?

The only discomfort you may experience is a slight pinprick or scratch on your ear as a small blood sample is taken.

How should I prepare for my test?

There is no special preparation for the test except that you should not wear nail varnish on the day of your appointment. You should continue to take all medications as normal.

Does this test determine if I am fit to fly?

This test alone does not determine whether or not you are fit for air travel but does indicate whether your oxygen levels meet the recommended requirements with or

without supplemental oxygen. Your GP or Consultant will advise you whether you are fit for air travel after considering all aspects of your health.

What happens if I need oxygen?

If supplemental oxygen is recommended for air travel you will be given further information on how this can be arranged.

Will I experience side effects after the test?

No – this test has no side effects associated with it.

What will happen if I do not want to have this test?

If you do not attend for this test we will not be able to pass important information to your doctor. This may make it difficult for your doctor to assess your fitness to fly and affect the medical treatment that you receive.

The test will be fully explained to you on the day. Please feel free to ask any questions that you may have about the test at this time.

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