

How to check your oxygen level at home

You have been provided with a finger probe called an oximeter or oxygen saturation probe. This is to enable health care professionals to monitor your health safely and effectively at home. You are not expected to need to check your oxygen levels all of the time, it is a helpful tool to use when your health care professionals specifically ask you to. There are many different styles but the instructions for use are the same.



Your oxygen saturation probe measures the percentage of blood carrying oxygen in your body. To get the best reading you need to make sure enough blood is flowing to the hand and finger wearing the device, which is normally achieved when your hand is warm and relaxed.

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How to use your Oxygen Saturation probe

1. Ensure the finger is inserted fully into the probe. If it has an “on” button, press this. Not all machines have a button and will automatically start working when placed on your finger.



2. Rest with the probe on your finger for a couple of minutes
3. The display window will show two numbers. Your “SpO2” is your oxygen saturation reading. Your Health Care Professional who issued this device will have advised you what this number needs to be above. The other number is your heart rate.
4. Remove the probe after recording your reading.

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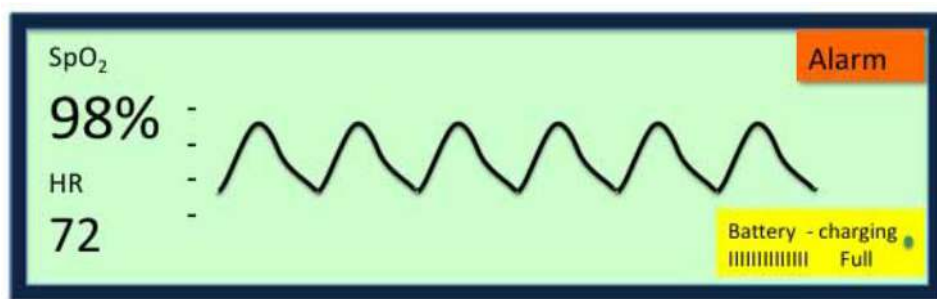
What if my oxygen monitor is not working?

The signal/pulse wave

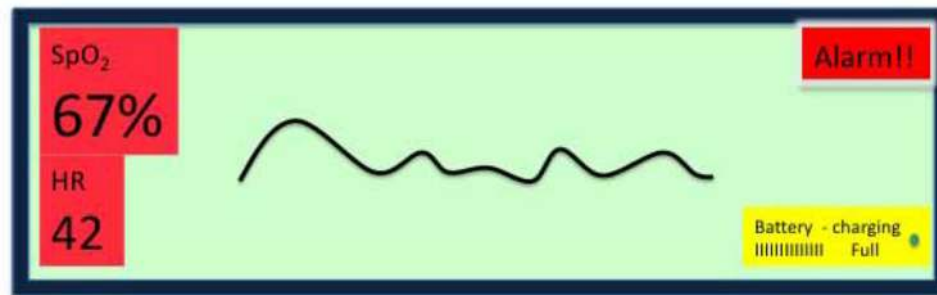
A good signal is essential to ensure a correct reading. This can be displayed in a few ways:

1. Pulse wave. Your probe **may** have a pulse wave (see below pictures) and it should be a regular wave like Picture A, not Picture B. If the wave is irregular like Picture B try to reposition the probe or try another finger until you get a regular wave.

Picture A



Picture B



2. Some monitors do not have a pulse wave, but instead have a symbol or a light that will tell you if the signal is poor or good. This symbol looks very similar to a “No Entry” sign. If the signal is not good, the “No Entry” symbol will start flashing. As with the pulse wave, try to reposition the probe or move it to another finger.



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If an oxygen saturation probe is not working, it is often due to the signal being affected therefore will show incorrect readings.

To avoid this from happening you can check a few things listed below:

- Wearing nail varnish or acrylic nails can affect oxygen readings so please remove these from your fingers if possible.



- Ensure the probe is not in very bright light such as sun light when in use as this can also affect the reading.
- Make sure you are sitting still and comfortable, lots of movement or shaking will give a poor reading.
- Cold hands can also affect the reading. If you have cold hands try to warm them up or rub your hands together for a few minutes prior to testing. If it is still not getting a reading try a different finger.
- Check that the battery does not need changing. This is routinely checked by the Health Care Professional when issuing your device.

Please contact your Health Care Professional if you have any issues using the device or are concerned about the readings shown.

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Caring for your oxygen saturation probe

If the probe gets dirty clean it gently with a damp cloth.

Store it in a safe place to avoid dropping or damage from spillages

With thanks to American Thoracic Society, British Lung Foundation and WHO for their information

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