

# PULSE OXIMETERS IN CARE HOMES

## People most at risk of poor health outcomes are best identified by oxygen levels

- A pulse oximeter is a small medical device that is put on the tip of the finger, to check someone's oxygen levels.
- Pulse oximeters measure blood oxygen levels by transmitting light through a finger.
- The blood oxygen level is one of the best ways of picking up any changes in the persons health and identify possible deterioration.
- Baseline readings are essential for monitoring anyone who is at risk of deterioration, especially those who may have limited communication, as these changes could be otherwise missed.

## Supply of pulse oximeters:

- The Care Provider's Alliance suggests oximeters held at a ratio of 1 for every 10 residents.
- All Care Homes should have received a supply of oximeters provided by their CCG.
- Oximeters must be replaced when broken or in disrepair and it is the care home's responsibility to ensure that oximeters are working properly. If oximeters do need replacing, then care homes will need to purchase them.

## Decontamination of equipment:

- Oximeters must be immediately decontaminated following their use.
- Clean and disinfect any reusable non-invasive care equipment, such as pulse oximeters, in-between uses and at the end of the day.
- Clean all reusable equipment systematically from the top or furthest away point.
- If electrical equipment or medical device cannot withstand decontamination with detergent/disinfectant, then the manufacturer's instructions must be followed.
- Ensure that any products or wipes used are anti-viral and conform to the standard EN14476.
- A flow chart for disinfection is available [here](#).

## How can I access resources and training?

- Resources and training are available on the HCPA [website](#) under Health and End of Life. A Basic Health Observations webinar is available alongside resources for assessing competencies.
- Health Education England have developed an e-Learning tool for the use of pulse oximeters and monitoring, accessible [here](#). Can be used as supplementary learning.

## When to check oxygen saturation levels?

- The [RESTORE2 Escalation Tool](#) should be used as a guide for taking oxygen saturation levels and ensuring that the appropriate actions are taken for each NEWS score.
- NEWS scores should also be measured against the resident's usual baseline (e.g. some residents may consistently have a NEWS score of 2) and it is important to notice any sudden changes in NEWS scores.
- For some resident's with underlying health conditions, alternative recommendations may come from a clinician or health professional – ensure this is reflected in any care planning.

**Ensure all residents baselines are known and clearly recorded and increase the frequency of monitoring depending on the situation or resident's condition.**

**Useful resources:** NHS: How to use your pulse oximeter and Covid-19 diary – Accessible [here](#).