

FACTSHEET



This fact sheet is for education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professionals to make sure this information is right for your child. If you would like to provide feedback on this fact sheet, please visit: www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/fact-sheets/feedback-form.

Travelling with respiratory support equipment

You will need to discuss with your respiratory/sleep doctor about your plans to travel well in advance of your departure date. If you are flying, your doctor may order a flight assessment.

Why would my child need a flight assessment?

A flight assessment test helps your doctor check if your child is at risk of developing breathing problems when travelling in an aeroplane. During air travel, aeroplane cabins have thinner air than the air at the ground level. This means that there is less oxygen to breathe and so some people with pre-existing breathing conditions may have a drop in their oxygen levels.

What is the test?

The flight assessment is done in a specialist respiratory unit at the Children's Hospital at Westmead. Your child will be asked to sit in a sealed cubicle and breathe in a special mixture of air. This mixture of air is the same oxygen level you breathe in when travelling in an aeroplane. Your child's oxygen level will be monitored closely using a finger probe to see how their body responds to this change in oxygen level. If your child normally uses oxygen, then he/she will wear this during the test.

For children who do not usually wear oxygen, the test helps decide if oxygen is needed during the flight and for children who already have oxygen, it will help check the level they need during a flight. It is important for you to bring your child's CPAP or BiPAP machine along to the appointment, as he/she may be required to use this

during the assessment. The test takes approximately 20 minutes.

Does the test decide if my child can fly?

The flight assessment test result is not the only factor that decides whether or not your child is fit for air travel. Your doctor will then tell you if your child is fit for air travel after considering all aspects of his/her health.



Things to consider...

- Every airline is different. Once you have decided on the airline, make contact with them well in advance of your trip to find out what their policies and procedures are when travelling with medical equipment.

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- Not all airlines will allow you to use your own oxygen cylinders and portable oxygen concentrators on board. Some airlines will provide oxygen at an additional cost. It is your responsibility to contact your airline to discuss the steps that need to be taken to obtain oxygen.
 - If you are travelling with your own medical equipment (positive pressure airway device; CPAP or BiPAP machine or a portable oxygen concentrator) you will need to enquire with the airline about their in-flight power supply.
 - Different airlines and different flights can have different access to inflight power. If they do not offer power supply, most airlines ask you to have enough battery power to last 150% of the flight time, including any layover time you may have. For instance if your flight is 10hrs, please have a battery supply of 15hrs. You are responsible for the purchase or loan of these from external companies.
 - **Please note- If you are using your own equipment on board, check with your airline that your equipment is on their list of acceptable medical equipment. Only pre-approved medical equipment will be allowed on board.**
 - Most airlines provide medical clearance forms on their websites. These forms often have to be completed and submitted a few days before your scheduled flight. If you do not have an approved travel clearance form you may be denied boarding. Sometimes these forms require information provided by your doctor, so make sure you allow enough time to get all the paperwork finished and signed!
 - If you are travelling overseas, make sure that you have travel insurance or access to health care. Insurance can be difficult for those with chronic illnesses but some countries have a shared health care arrangement with Australia that will cover you for emergencies.
 - A friendly reminder to arrive to the airport early to allow for extra time to clear security check points.

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