



Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT)

What is Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy?

Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy, or “HBOT” for short, is a special medical treatment where you breathe 100% oxygen in a chamber with higher pressure than normal. Normally, we breathe air that is about 21% oxygen, but in HBOT, you breathe pure oxygen in a space where the air pressure is much higher than usual, like being under water several feet deep.

This extra pressure helps your lungs take in more oxygen than normal. The oxygen then spreads through your blood and helps your body heal faster.

Imagine filling a sponge with water, under normal conditions, the sponge absorbs some. But if you push that sponge into a bucket under pressure, it soaks up *a lot* more. That’s what HBOT does with oxygen and your body.

Why is HBOT Used?

HBOT helps treat certain medical problems where extra oxygen can improve healing or save tissue. It’s not for everyday issues, but for conditions where oxygen is either not getting to a part of your body or where it can help stop serious damage.

Here are some of the main reasons HBOT is used:

Common Indications

- 1. Carbon Monoxide Poisoning**
Breathing in fumes from fires, car exhaust, or faulty heaters can cause poisoning. HBOT helps remove carbon monoxide from the blood faster and reduces brain injury.
- 2. Wounds That Won’t Heal (like Diabetic Foot Ulcers)**
For people with diabetes or poor circulation, wounds can take too long to heal. Extra oxygen helps new blood vessels grow and fights infection.
- 3. Crushed or Burned Tissues**
In accidents where tissue is damaged (like crush injuries or burns), HBOT can help reduce swelling and save parts that might otherwise die.
- 4. Severe Infections**
Some rare but serious infections, such as gas gangrene or flesh-eating bacteria, respond well to HBOT because oxygen helps kill the bacteria and save tissue.

5. **Radiation Damage**

People who had radiation therapy for cancer (like in the bladder, jaw, or bowel) sometimes suffer long-term tissue damage. HBOT can help that tissue heal.

6. **Skin Grafts or Flaps Not Taking**

If a skin graft (from surgery) is not healing well or doesn't have good blood flow, HBOT may improve its survival.

7. **Sudden Vision or Hearing Loss**

In rare cases of sudden hearing or vision loss caused by blood flow issues, HBOT might help restore function — if started early.

8. **Decompression Sickness ("The Bends")**

This affects divers who come up too quickly from deep water. Bubbles form in the blood, which can be deadly. HBOT is a lifesaver in these cases.

What Happens During a Session?

You'll lie in a special chamber either a small one just for you or a larger room where several people can be treated at once.

- The session usually lasts **about 1.5 to 2 hours**.
- You just relax, maybe watch TV or nap.
- You'll feel pressure in your ears, like going up in a plane or diving into a pool. Swallowing or yawning can help pop your ears.
- You breathe pure oxygen through a mask or hood, or just by being inside the chamber depending on the setup.

You may need **multiple sessions** sometimes up to 20, 30, or more, depending on the problem being treated.

Are There Risks or Side Effects?

HBOT is generally safe, especially when done under proper supervision. But like any treatment, it can have some side effects.

Common (but usually mild) side effects:

- **Ear discomfort or pressure** (like on an airplane)
- **Feeling tired after the session**
- **Mild sinus pain**

Less common but more serious:

- **Ear barotrauma** (ear pain or injury from pressure)
- **Temporary vision changes** – usually mild and go away after treatment
- **Oxygen toxicity** – too much oxygen can cause seizures, but this is very rare and only happens if the treatment is not managed properly
- **Lung collapse** – extremely rare, seen in people with certain lung conditions

If you have a cold, fever, or are feeling sick, you should tell the HBOT team before your session. They might delay the treatment to keep you safe.

Who Should Not Get HBOT?

Most people can safely receive HBOT, but it may not be right for everyone. You may not be a candidate if you:

- Have **untreated pneumothorax** (air trapped in the lung space)
- Are **pregnant** (depending on the condition your doctor will decide)
- Have certain types of **lung disease** or a history of seizures

Always let your doctor know about any other medical conditions or medications you're on.

Final Thoughts

HBOT is not a miracle cure, but when used for the right problems, it can be very helpful. It boosts your body's ability to heal, fight infection, and repair damaged tissue. Most people tolerate it well, and the sessions are painless.

If your doctor recommends HBOT, ask questions. Make sure you understand why you need it, how long it will take, and what to expect. The more you know, the more comfortable you'll feel.

