



NHOPA NEWS

National Home Oxygen Patients Association

Volume 11, Number 2

February 2008

Travel Abroad with Oxygen Equipment It's worth the effort!

By Dan Davis

Last May I traveled to Paris with the accompanying oxygen equipment being taken as carry-on luggage and stored in the overhead bins. I traveled with my SeQual Eclipse portable concentrator, my ResMed V-Pap III (sleep apnea) and my usual carry-on bag. The only stress was traversing three airports with so much carry-on luggage but it was definitely worth the effort.

Our travel itinerary included four nights in Paris and seven nights aboard Uniworld's river ship cruising the Seine River between Paris and LeHavre on the Atlantic.

I am 81 and use oxygen with my sleep apnea machine at night and also when I exercise. Every night I attach the tubing from my concentrator to my V-Pap. The Eclipse gives steady flow oxygen, which is recommended for sleep apnea equipment. (Note: Eclipse can be switched to pulse mode if needed) The Eclipse works on both 110 and 220 volt electricity and also comes with one battery installed in the machine, for portable use.

To avoid problems and stress, and to make flying as painless as possible, I carry a doctor's letter advising of my need to carry on my oxygen equipment for storage only, and not for use while on board the aircraft. Because I have these extra machines, I request wheelchair service at all airports when I make my reservations, and I advise the airline the names of the machines that I carry onboard and ask if they need any documentation.

Curbside assistance made it easy to get my luggage to the check-in counter then onto to Security. The reduction in stress and energy usage was well-worth the expense of the tips.

The airlines I traveled on and TSA checkpoints allowed the V-Pap and the Eclipse to be

carried onboard for storage. Northwest allowed me to pre-board along with the first class passengers, giving me time to stow everything in the overheads and get settled before the wave of coach passengers crowded the aisles and storage bins. The Eclipse weighs about 20 pounds, has a retractable handle for pulling the detachable trolley, and is relatively easy to lift for storage.

The equipment I traveled with needed certain accessories for travel abroad. I left the battery inside the Eclipse and put the electric converter in my carry-on bag to insure its arrival with the machine. [Editor's Note: Before traveling it is advised to review DOT's new battery policy at www.faa.gov or www.dot.gov] I packed two adapters for 220 volt French recessed receptacles (purchased at Radio Shack or Circuit City), along with a 6 foot extension cord with an elongated multiple-socket three-prong receptacle attached. I also packed an adapter that converts a grounded plug to become a two-prong plug, and a small receptacle insert which accommodates three plugs. My machines are pre-programmed for both 110 volts (U.S. voltage) and 220 volts (European voltage), so no transformer is needed.

As it turned out, I needed all these items. The adapter plug furnished me for the Eclipse was too large to fit into French receptacles, but my Radio Shack adapter worked perfectly and I needed the three-to-two plug adapter to accommodate the grounded Eclipse plug. The mini multi-plug I pack always comes in handy, to accommodate the lamps and radio on the bedside table in addition to my equipment.

Paris was wonderful, as usual. We went to the

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top of the Arc d'Triomphe for a great view of Paris and its grand boulevards. It rained and was foggy when we rode to the top of the Eiffel Tower, but it was exciting just to be there. The Louvre was wonderful, as ever, and the Marmottan Museum still contains the great Monet water lilies. My best meal was at the Petit Zinc restaurant on the left bank that served me the most wonderful thick-cut steak of calves liver (Fois gras de veau), rare and perfectly seasoned.

As for the cruise, the highlights included viewing the Seine from nearby hilltops and enjoying the passing parade of villages alongside the river. We especially enjoyed visiting the cathedral and then spending two hours in the wonderful art museum in Rouen, the day at leisure in the beautiful port town of Honfleur and the morning soaking in the magnificence of the Monet gardens and lily ponds at Giverny. The crew, management and cruise director combined to make the cruise most memorable.

This was one of the best trips we ever have taken. The oxygen equipment worked easily and without problems. I learned to set up both machines by my bed in about 10 minutes. One advantage of a cruise, particularly when one has a large amount of luggage, is that one does not have to pack and unpack luggage from one day to the next.

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The National Home Oxygen Patients Association is devoted exclusively to improving the lives of people across the country who require supplementary oxygen on a regular basis.

Publication of the NHOPA monthly newsletter is made possible through a generous grant from the American Association for Homecare.

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working on amending this site to include articles on oxygen use for travelers as well as offering his Travel Tips booklet and other information without charge.

Traveling with POCs

Shelley Krush wrote to us with a question "I am a current member of your organization (a newbie of just a few months) and have so far found your newsletters really informative. I was wondering if you could direct me to the resource where I can get a sticker to put on my SeQual Eclipse in order to comply with the NTSB (National Transportation & Safety Board?"

Pam Jackson with SeQual responded with the following "There is a sticker on the front belly of the Eclipse that is an airplane and a statement on the bottom of the unit that says it is approved by the FAA for use on commercial aircraft."

Pam, thanks for your response

For other POCs already approved check for a similar sticker or statement on the unit or contact the manufacturer for more information.

Also remember that there are some new rulings on the number of batteries you can carry, so you might want to check these regulations as well as with your airline carrier regarding extra batteries. Information on how batteries should be carried on aircraft was published in the July 07 NHOPA newsletter. You can also check new regulations on lithium batteries at:

safetravel.dot.gov/whats_new_batteries.html.

New Resources

- A new magazine "Breathing" is available and is published by the Academy of Certified Case Managers. Sign up for your free subscription on line at: <http://breathingmagazine.com> . Subscriptions are free to patients; non-patients will need to pay a subscription fee.
- Caregivers now have a website to find helpful information at www.CareGiverHelper.com. This website is a free online service providing families with ways to communicate, organize and find resources to support parents or care recipients.

Questions & Answers

NHOPA received an email from an oxygen user's family member that we thought important enough to print. (continued on page 3)

"My mom is actually an oxygen user and sometimes she takes it off for a couple of hours as a break. She claims that her readings are good and that's how she justifies going without it for a couple of hours, but isn't the lack of oxygen to all of her organs detrimental even for that brief time period? I have explained my concerns to her but I think sometimes she doesn't want to feel "hooked up" to oxygen all the time and wants to feel like her old self, which I can definitely understand. (She does use her oxygen most of the time.) Do you find this to be true of a lot of patients? Do you think a lot of patients have a challenging time using oxygen in public? At restaurants, movies, etc? My mom quit smoking many years before her diagnosis with COPD, but she feels like she is being judged. I wonder how many other oxygen users feel the same way."

NHOPA President Jon Tiger responded

1. 'She claims that her readings are good' – In order to determine this I'm assuming she's using a pulse oximeter which reads her saturation level. If so and the unit works properly, her saturations should be above 88%. She should have a conversation with her doctor as to what her appropriate levels should be and make sure that she is using her oxygen properly.

2. Do I think most patients don't want to be "hooked up" - Absolutely. I also think it's a phenomenon particular to those using a nasal cannula. There's something about having something on your face that causes people to feel closed in. This can happen with eye glasses as well but one tends to adjust to glasses and they are more accepted socially. The cannula problem is exacerbated because the tubing also irritates the neck and ears and oxygen causes the nose to run and it dries the throat out. The psychological aspect is a factor where people feel they are tethered and like their life is over which can cause depression.

3. Do I think a lot of patients have a challenging time using oxygen in public? - Again, absolutely. People have often approached me in public saying that they are on oxygen. I always ask them where it is and get responses like, 'oh I only came in here for a couple of things', 'it's so difficult to get it out of my car', or 'I just hate to wear it in public'. I usually tell them that these activities are

exactly when they need to be on it. Almost defensively they'll then ask me why I'm not wearing my oxygen. I use a delivery system called transtracheal oxygen. It is a small tube that goes into a small opening in my neck directly into the trachea. When I explain this to them I have yet to find someone who has heard of it. I find this sad. All studies show that the benefits far outweigh using a cannula and I've never in 12 years felt hooked up or uncomfortable in public.

4. 'She feels like she is being judged' - Well now that you've said it, it makes sense. But frankly it's not something I've ever thought about. I will now though."

Thanks for the questions and Jon thanks for your responses.

Swimming feedback

Ellen Dobrin from NY wrote "Just got your latest newsletter. I have been swimming for years, but what have done in the past is walk to the pool with my Helios while pushing an E tank on a stroller. [At the pool] I remove the Helios and hook up to the E tank with a 50' hose. Leaving the E tank on the side of the pool I go swimming, probably annoying the other swimmers with my tubing (there are not a lot of people in the pool). I now, thanks to Peter Ewald, have an alternative way of swimming by placing my Helios in a styrofoam cooler and letting it float along side me, alleviating the tubing laying on the top of the pool. Great idea. Thank you."

Ellen thanks for your feedback. One should always make sure that the Helios is well protected inside the cooler and that the cooler is not opened as damage to your Helios unit may result.

Pulse Oximeters

Bill Frankenfield wrote "Just wanted to let you know, the pulse oximeter that Nonin makes for prescriptions is identical to the "Sportstat" and the "Flightstat" that Nonin makes. The only difference is the decal on the unit. They are one and the same. I have a "Flightstat" that I bought about six years ago from a supplier that deals in aircraft equipment."

Bill thanks for the information. Yes these units are available typically without a physician's prescription. Retailers that sell these units can be found at <http://www.sportstat.nonin.com/> or at <http://www.flightstat.nonin.com>.

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- Check out www.optimizerx.com for special savings, free trials and support programs to help you better afford and optimize results for the medicines and healthcare products you need. There are prescription as well as over the counter medication coupons and assistance. Simply sign up for the free service at the website.
- Did you know that the TSA (Transportation Security Administration) includes a link to the NHOPA website under their "Medical Oxygen and Respiratory Related Equipment" section (under the "For Travelers" tab. Check it out at www.tsa.gov.

Angels – Explained by Children

(received via email – anonymous)

- I only know the names of two angels, Hark and Harold. ~~~Gregory, 5
- Everybody's got it all wrong. Angels don't wear halos anymore. I forget why, but scientists are working on it. ~Olive, 9
- It's not easy to become an angel! First, you die. Then you go to Heaven, and then there's still the flight training to go through. And then you got to agree to wear those angel clothes. ~~Matthew, 9
- Angels work for God and watch over kids when God has to go do something else. ~~~Mitchell, 7
- My guardian angel helps me with math, but he's not much good for science. ~~~Henry, 8
- Angels don't eat, but they drink milk from Holy Cows!!! ~~~Jack, 6
- Angels talk all the way while they're flying you up to heaven. The main subject is where you went wrong before you got dead. ~~~Daniel, 9
- When an angel gets mad, he takes a deep breath and counts to ten. And when he lets out his breath, somewhere there's a tornado. ~~~Reagan, 10
- Angels have a lot to do and they keep very busy. If you lose a tooth, an angel comes in through your window and leaves money under your pillow. Then when it gets cold, angels go south for the winter. ~~~Sara, 6
- Angels live in cloud houses made by God and his son, who's a very good carpenter. ~~~Jared, 8
- All angels are girls because they gotta wear dresses and boys didn't go for it. ~~~Antonio, 9
- My angel is my grandma who died last year. She got a big head start on helping me while she was still down here on earth. ~~~Lynn, 9
- Some of the angels are in charge of helping heal sick animals and pets. And if they don't make the animals get better, they help the child get over it. ~~~Vicki, 8
- What I don't get about angels is why, when someone is in love, they shoot arrows at them. ~~~Sarah, 7

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