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## Observe precautions when using medical oxygen at home

By [Teresa McQuerrey](#)

July 6, 2010

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The recent devastating house fire in Mesa del Caballo has brought up a concern about smoking while medical oxygen is in use in a home.

Mary Jane Rogers, director of Hospice Compassus, wanted to share some tips for the safe use of medical oxygen.

"We mostly want to be sure that not only patients are aware of safety precautions, but caregivers and extended family members are as well," Rogers said.

"When visiting a family member or friend and you see oxygen is use, it's good to know the precautions that are necessary so we can all be alert to the dangers and help the patient who may be in jeopardy.

"Our staff is acutely aware and is constantly reminding patients when we visit in the home, but it never hurts that others who visit the patients are equally aware of the dangers and can reinforce those safety tips that we give on a routine basis," Rogers said.

She shared the following from a couple of Internet sites; surprisingly, smoking is not the only source of a potential fire hazard when medical oxygen is in use.

- Oxygen itself does not burn. Oxygen can feed a spark and cause it to become a large fire in seconds.
- Do not allow anyone to smoke in the room where oxygen is being used; post the NO SMOKING signs provided by your oxygen home care company.
- Do not use oxygen within 10 feet of open flames such as fireplaces, wood-burning stoves or gas stoves.
- Don't use anything with frayed cords or prone to electrical shorts, they could spark.
- Avoid using electrical razors and hair dryers while using oxygen.
- Don't use an appliance with a control box such as a heating pad, the control box may throw sparks.
- Static electricity should be minimized: avoid nylon or woolen clothing because it is more likely to cause static electricity; when the air is dry, use a humidifier to add moisture and minimize the possibility of creating static electricity.
- Never apply any oily substance, such as petroleum based products,

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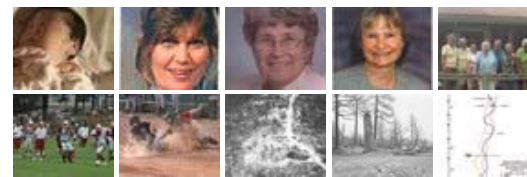


to your nose, lips or the lower part of your face.

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