

Hyperbaric Oxygen FAQ

Q: What is Hyperbaric Oxygen?

A: Hyperbaric Oxygen, also known as HBO, is a medical treatment in which the patient breathes 100% oxygen inside a hyperbaric chamber at pressures greater than normal atmospheric pressure.

Q: How does Hyperbaric Oxygen work?

A: Breathing 100% oxygen under pressure dissolves a super high concentration of oxygen in the blood stream, up to 20 times as much as is normally carried in the blood stream breathing air at normal atmospheric pressure. This hyperoxygenation of the bloodstream has many benefits. It allows new blood vessels to form in tissues that have poor circulation or low oxygen levels. Poor circulation can be the result of trauma, disease or radiation treatment for cancer. It also helps the body fight certain types of bacterial infection. Normally when we have an infection our white blood cells engulf and destroy bacteria. These white cells require oxygen in order to kill the bacteria, so the more oxygen we provide the white cells the more effective they are at reducing bacterial numbers and thereby bringing the infection under control. There are many other benefits to Hyperbaric Oxygen, but in the setting of wound healing, Hyperoxygenation, new blood vessel formation and antibacterial effects are the most important.

Q: What conditions are treated with Hyperbaric Oxygen?

A: In the realm of wound care in general, Hyperbaric Oxygen is useful in the treatment of the following conditions: Diabetic foot infection, Bone infection, Compromised skin grafts and flaps, Soft tissue and boney radiation tissue damage, Thermal burns, and Crush injuries.

Q: What does it feel like to go into the Hyperbaric Chamber?

A: A special gown is provided for the patient to wear inside the chamber. The patient lies down in the chamber and is provided a sheet or blanket for cover. The chamber is clear and the patient can see all around. When the pressure changes the patient may feel a popping sensation in the ears like when flying in an airplane or driving in the mountains. Television is provided for your viewing entertainment.

Q: How long does the treatment take?

A: Each treatment takes about 2 to 2.5 hours. The patient is typically prescribed 20 treatments initially and may go up to as many as 60 treatments total depending on response to therapy. Treatments are provided once a day Monday through Friday.

Q: Is Hyperbaric Oxygen safe?

A: Hyperbaric Oxygen is extremely safe. Every day all across the US people undergo safe and effective Hyperbaric Oxygen therapy. However, like any medical procedure there are potential risks and side effects. Although extremely rare these risks and side effects can potentially be significant. Every patient undergoes a thorough screening and discussion of the benefits, potential risks and side effects of Hyperbaric Oxygen therapy prior to treatment. In most cases the Benefits of Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy far outweigh any potential risk.