



Promoting the health and welfare of people with developmental disabilities wherever they choose to live, work and spend their day.

Pulse Oximeters and COVID-19

How does COVID-19 affect a person's oxygen levels?

Many people with COVID-19 have low oxygen levels, even when they are feeling well. Low oxygen levels can be an early warning sign that people need medical care.

What is a pulse oximeter?

A pulse oximeter is a small device that clips onto your finger and measures the level of oxygen in your blood. They are used often in hospitals and medical offices. Many consider oxygen level a vital sign, like blood pressure.



[Watch](#) Dr. Laura's Medical Moment on Pulse Oximeters

Measuring a pulse oximeter

Direct support professionals (DSP) need to have Medication Administration Category 1 Certification to support someone with a pulse oximeter.

There is helpful and detailed information found on pages 122 through 125 of the [Medication Administration Category 1 Certification Curriculum](#).

Natural Supports and Family Members, who do not need to be certified, should follow the following steps when using a pulse oximeter:

1. Make measurements indoors, at rest, and during quiet breathing
2. Use the index or middle finger, avoid the toes or ear lobes
3. Only accept values associated with a strong pulse signal
4. Wait 30–60 seconds for the most accurate reading
5. Measure and record values two to three times per day (Once per shift)
6. Remove nail polish from the finger on which measurements are made
7. Warm up cold extremities prior to measurement

Know when to get help



Call the Doctor if:

1. The oxygen saturation is less than 95%
2. There is a decrease in oxygen saturation in two or more readings

Call 911 if:

1. The person appears to have difficulty breathing
2. The oxygen saturation is 89% or less saturation in two or more readings

Stay Well-Informed by checking out these other available resources

[NPR Article: Pulse Oximeters Can Give Errors For Patients with Dark Skin](#)

[Well Aware: Practical Tips for the DD Community COVID-19](#)

[Obtaining Disposable Masks and Pulse Oximeters](#)

[DODD COVID-19 Guidance](#)



#MasksOn

Remember, we are all in this together Ohio!