



West Yorkshire  
Fire & Rescue Service

# Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Advice



Medicines, medical devices and related products help treat health conditions, but some can **increase fire risk** when combined with heat, sparks or naked flames.

### Emollient skin products



**Moisturising skin products (emollients), such as creams, lotions, sprays and oils, can increase the risk of fire.** Emollients are not flammable themselves, but regular use can leave a flammable residue on clothing, bedding and bandages, which can cause these fabrics to burn faster and more intensely.

### Home oxygen therapy



**Oxygen is not flammable, but it makes other materials burn more easily, causing fires to burn faster and hotter.** When in use, oxygen can saturate materials, increasing the likelihood and severity of a fire. Even a small spark can be dangerous in an oxygen-enriched environment.

### Airflow pressure-relieving equipment



**Airflow mattresses, cushions or overlays help relieve pressure for people with restricted mobility.** If punctured by heat or flame, the airflow can cause a fire to develop more quickly.

## Medication



**Some medicines can make people very drowsy or slow to react.** This can affect their ability to hear a smoke detector or respond quickly in an emergency. Drinking alcohol while taking these medicines can increase these side effects.

## Other medical devices and products



**Some medical devices and products can increase fire risk if they are electrical, battery powered or made from flammable materials.** Incorrect use, charging, or storage near heat or ignition sources can increase the risk of fire.

Understanding  
the risks can help  
keep you safe.

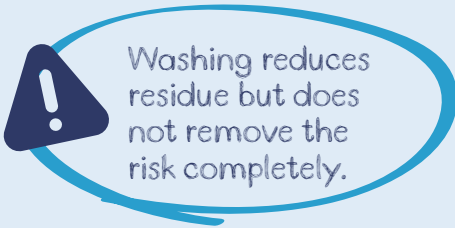


# Emollient skin products

This advice applies to all emollients, including water-based creams and those containing oils or paraffin.

## To keep safe:

- ✓ Wash bedding and clothing daily at the highest safe temperature.



- ✓ Keep a safe distance from open fires, gas fires and heaters.
- ✓ Cover soft furnishings with a washable throw and wash this regularly.
- ✓ Read and follow product warning labels.
- ✓ Try to stop smoking - ask your GP or pharmacist for support.



## Do not:

- ✗ Smoke or allow others to smoke near contaminated fabrics.
- ✗ Smoke in bed.
- ✗ Use gas or electric hobs when wearing contaminated or loose flowing fabrics.
- ✗ Dry contaminated fabrics in front of fires or heaters.
- ✗ Use candles or other naked flames near contaminated fabrics. Consider using battery-operated candles instead.



# Home oxygen therapy

This advice applies to all oxygen used in the home, including prescribed and non-prescribed oxygen.

## To keep safe:

- ✔ Turn off oxygen when not in use.
- ✔ Keep oxygen well away from all ignition sources, including smoking, cooking, candles and heaters.
- ✔ Ventilate rooms when oxygen is being used.
- ✔ Store oxygen cylinders safely and follow the supplier's advice.
- ✔ Keep oxygen at least:

**3 metres (10 feet)**

from open fires.

← 3m

**1.5 metres (5 feet)**

from heaters, ovens and sources of static electricity (e.g., hairdryers, TVs, fans).

← 1.5m

## Do not:

- ✘ Smoke or vape while oxygen is in use or for **30 minutes** after switching it off.
- ✘ Use any other ignition source (including cooking, candles, matches or oil burners) during this time.
- ✘ Leave tubing trailing across floor coverings or trapped under doors.



## Using emollients and oxygen together

### To keep safe:

- ✔ Avoid getting emollient products on oxygen tubing or equipment.
- ✔ Speak to your healthcare professional about suitable products for your face.

# Airflow pressure-relieving equipment

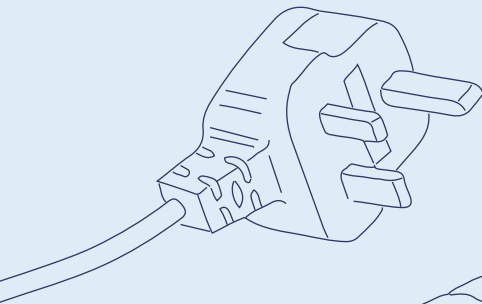
People using this equipment may need assistance to escape if a fire starts.

## To keep safe:

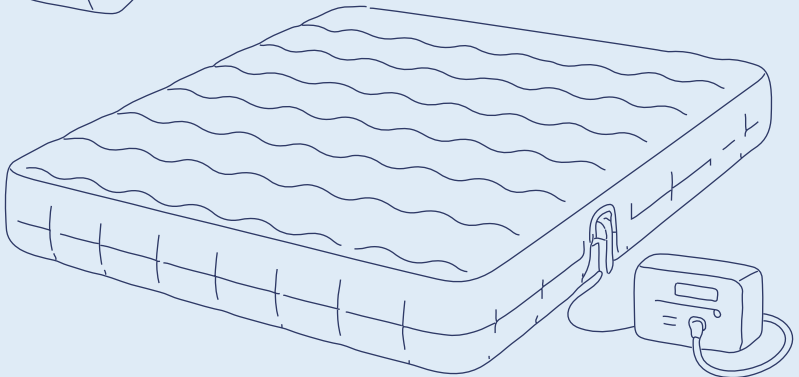
- ✔ Plug equipment into a single wall socket – avoid using a multi-socket adapter.
- ✔ Keep a phone or telecare device within reach.
- ✔ If using emollients, cover cushions with a washable throw and wash it regularly.

## Do not:

- ✘ Smoke in bed or while using the equipment.
- ✘ Place heated appliances (hairdryers, curlers, electric blankets) on the equipment.
- ✘ Use heaters or naked flames near the equipment.



Don't use candles, matches or lighters near airflow equipment.



# Medication

## To keep safe:

- ✔ Take medication exactly as prescribed.
- ✔ Make sure cigarettes, candles and incense are fully extinguished before bed.
- ✔ Keep a phone within easy reach.



## Do not:

- ✗ Cook if medication makes you drowsy, dizzy or unsteady.
- ✗ Smoke, use naked flames or other heat sources if you feel drowsy or confused.

Some medicines can affect alertness and reaction times. Take care when using heat sources.



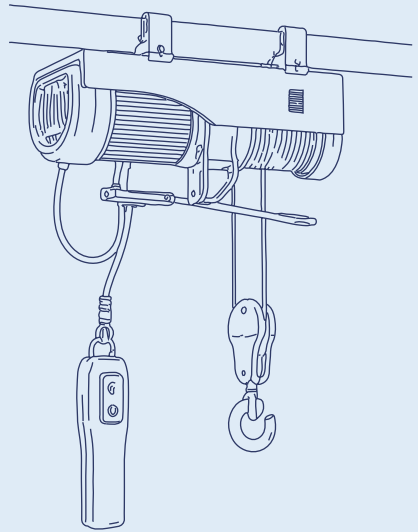
# Other medical devices

## To keep safe:

- ✔ Follow manufacturer and supplier instructions on use and charging.
- ✔ Keep equipment well-ventilated and free from dust.
- ✔ Position devices away from heat sources and naked flames.
- ✔ Check cables and plugs regularly for damage.

## Do not:

- ✘ Use damaged equipment.
- ✘ Cover devices in a way that could cause overheating.



# Incontinence products

Incontinence products are highly flammable and can make fires spread quickly.

## To keep safe:

- ✔ Store products away from heat, ignition sources and electrical equipment.
- ✔ Keep products away from naked flames including matches and lighters.
- ✔ Avoid using electric blankets if you use airflow equipment, emollients, or are experiencing incontinence.

Take care  
when storing  
products.

# Keeping yourself safe

Fire risk can be affected by health, medication, equipment and daily routines. These simple actions can reduce the risk:



Tell your healthcare professional or carer if your condition changes.



Share fire safety advice with family, friends and carers so they can help keep you safe.



Test smoke detectors weekly - If you can't reach them, ask a family member, friend or carer to help.



#TestItTuesday

# If clothing catches fire...



**STOP** moving.



**DROP** to the ground or floor.



**ROLL** to put out the fire.



You should lie down and roll around.



Don't run around as you will make the flames worse.

If possible, smother the flames with a heavy material such as a coat or a blanket.



# What to do if a fire starts



If safe to do so, switch off medical equipment using the controls (not the plug).



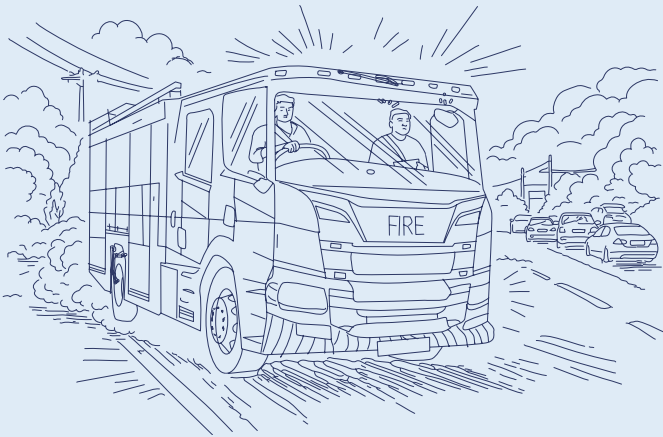
Leave the property, closing doors behind you where possible to slow the spread of fire and smoke.



Get out, stay out and call 999 immediately. Do not re-enter the property.



If you cannot get out, stay in a room behind a closed door and call 999 immediately.



Get out, stay out,  
call 999





Medicines and Medical Devices

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## Useful contacts

### Stop Smoking Support:

- 0300 123 1044
- [nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking](https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking)

### Medical Advice:

- Speak to your GP or healthcare professional.

### Equipment Issues:

- Contact the supplier.

Report medicine side effects or equipment safety concerns via the MHRA Yellow Card scheme: [yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk](https://www.yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk)

Home Fire Safety Advice: 0800 587 4536

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