

At-Home Ventilation

Essential Information and Common Questions from Patients & Families

Transitioning to a ventilator at home can feel overwhelming. However, thousands of people—from those who need breathing support only at night to those requiring round-the-clock assistance—utilize ventilator therapy outside of the hospital setting every day. Unicare is here to help every step of the way and make the process as seamless as possible.

How a Home Ventilator Helps

Home ventilation provides needed respiratory support for patients while avoiding more time spent in the hospital. That matters because in addition to reducing healthcare-associated infections, being at home also means being in familiar surroundings, close to family, routines, and daily comforts that many patients value.

Home ventilation varies patient to patient, with some people using it only part of the day, while others depend on continuous support because of advanced lung disease, neuromuscular illness, or another chronic condition. With this transition, many patients and families have questions that accompany this change.

Common Patient Questions

Do you need to keep the ventilator stationary or permanently indoors?

Your care plan depends on your diagnosis, your strength, and the level of support prescribed. Some people use a ventilator only while sleeping. Others use portable equipment that allows them to leave home, attend appointments, and continue many daily routines. Your care plan will be discussed alongside your clinician and designated respiratory therapist to determine what works for you.

Are ventilators difficult to tolerate or painful for the patient?

Pain is not common with ventilator use. In many cases, the reason a ventilator is prescribed is that breathing has already become difficult enough to affect sleep, energy, comfort, or daily function. Ventilator support often eases those symptoms rather than creating new ones.

Can family members and caregivers run ventilators at home?

Home ventilators are intended for patient and caregiver use after training. If you are prescribed non-invasive ventilation, the device is usually connected to a mask over the nose, mouth, or both.

If invasive ventilation is required, the training is more extensive, but home care is still possible with the right preparation and support from your Unicare respiratory therapist.

Possible Risks and Complications

Important safety considerations

A ventilator can be used safely at home, but there are easily avoidable risks to understand. Respiratory infection is one of them. Long-term or high-pressure ventilation can injure lung tissue or cause a collapsed lung in severe cases. Patients may also see an increased dependency on the ventilator depending on symptom progression, which will be monitored and adjusted to by Unicare's team.

Preparing to Go Home

Insurance and equipment planning

Most insurance plans cover home mechanical ventilation, but benefits differ by plan and by equipment category. It helps to confirm coverage early, work with the Unicare and discharge team to determine if any additional equipment may be required outside of the ventilator and supplies, and talk through future supply planning and delivery.

Home assessment

Before discharge, your team may review whether the home is ready for ventilator care. Common practical needs include reliable electrical access, space for the device and supplies, a backup power plan, and clear access for emergency responders.

Caregiver training

Training is a central part of discharge planning. Patients and caregivers need instruction in routine use, alarm response, cleaning steps, and emergency procedures. The Unicare team will assist the at-home caregiver with training on the equipment and make themselves available to answer any questions you or your family may have.

Day-to-Day Home Ventilator Care

Daily equipment checks

- Check the ventilator settings and alarms as instructed by your care team.
- Make sure the battery is charged and backup equipment is available.
- Inspect the tubing, mask, and filters for damage, looseness, or moisture buildup.

A common patient mistake is waiting until a part fails before replacing it. If a mask cushion is worn, a filter is dirty, or tubing no longer seals well, call for replacement before it becomes an issue.

Cleaning and infection prevention

Wash your hands before touching the ventilator circuit, mask, tracheostomy supplies, or humidifier parts. Clean and replace equipment exactly on the schedule provided for your device and supplies. Keep the machine area free of dust, clutter, and pet hair.

Night setup and emergency readiness

Before sleep, keep needed supplies within reach. That usually includes extra tubing, power backup, emergency phone numbers, and any items your team told you to keep at the bedside.

Ongoing Support at Home

Home ventilation works best when responsibilities are clear. Keep a current list of your physician, respiratory therapist, equipment provider, emergency contacts, and after-hours support numbers in an easy-to-find place.

With the right training, equipment, and follow-up, home mechanical ventilation can make long-term respiratory support possible outside the hospital while maintaining safety and structure in daily care.



Questions? We're here to help.

Contact your Unicare Health respiratory therapist or call **800.400.6333** for support, supply orders, or guidance on at-home ventilator care.