

# **Hyperbaric Medicine Department Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy**

---

**A guide to help you learn about and get ready for your treatment.**

## **About this book**

Hyperbaric oxygen therapy can be frightening for you and your family. Members of your hyperbaric team created this booklet to help answer some of your questions about hyperbaric oxygen therapy.

We are here to help you heal and recover, and will be pleased to answer questions at any time – no question is too simple to ask.

## **What is hyperbaric oxygen therapy?**

Hyperbaric oxygen therapy is a painless treatment that increases the amount of oxygen in your body. This is done by breathing pure oxygen while you are in a hyperbaric oxygen chamber.

A hyperbaric oxygen chamber is an enclosed chamber that you lie inside. The pressure inside the chamber is increased as you breathe pure oxygen.

The increased pressure inside the chamber allows your body to take up more oxygen. Depending on your medical issue, this oxygen can aid in healing tissue, fighting infection, decrease swelling and causing new blood vessel growth.

At the Hamilton General Hospital - Hyperbaric Medicine Department, your treatment will be in a "monoplace" chamber. You will be inside the chamber and a therapist and doctor will be outside in the room.

## The Hyperbaric Chamber



The chamber is a clear tube so you will be able to see through it. The therapist or doctor will always be in the room and you will be able to see and talk to them. You will be able to see the chamber before your first hyperbaric oxygen treatment, if you wish.

## **What is hyperbaric oxygen therapy used for?**

Hyperbaric oxygen therapy is used to treat:

- poor wound healing
- carbon monoxide poisoning
- gas gangrene, soft tissue infection
- diving accidents or the “bends”
- air and gas embolism
- burns
- soft tissue radiation injury
- osteomyelitis
- osteoradionecrosis (bone damage from radiation)
- acute blood loss anemia
- intracranial abscess
- skin grafts and flaps
- thermal burns
- crush injury
- compartment syndrome
- acute traumatic ischaemias
- sudden loss of hearing (called sensorineural)

## How do I get ready to go in the hyperbaric chamber?

### Before you start your treatment:

- go to the bathroom
- remove all clothing, including your underwear, nylons and socks
- put on the special gown
- remove dentures (please bring your own denture cup)

For female patients – remove menstrual pads (tampons and diva cup are allowed)

### You cannot wear:

- contact lenses, dentures, and/or hearing aids
- jewellery (including watches)
- hair spray
- ointments
- makeup
- creams
- nail polish
- perfume or cologne
- lotions or petroleum jelly
- deodorant
- velcro
- hair elastic bands
- medication patches

You **cannot** eat while in the chamber. This includes chewing gum or sucking candies.

You **can** wear your eyeglasses. We will give you a bottle of water to drink and a bed pan to use in the chamber if needed.

Tell the therapist right away if you become nauseated before or during treatment.

Sorry, books and magazines are not allowed inside the chamber. However, a television is available for viewing and you can hear the sound inside the chamber.

## What are the risks?

Although hyperbaric oxygen therapy is very safe, there are potential risks that we need to avoid. Your doctor will talk to you about these risks and how to avoid them before you agree to having the treatment.

While in the chamber you will breathe pure oxygen which is flammable. **We take every precaution to make sure nothing that could cause a spark is taken into the chamber with you.**

You will be given a special gown to wear during your treatment. It is made of 100% cotton to reduce the risk of static electricity. **Please do not wear any other clothing underneath the gown.**

Check with the therapist if you are not sure. If you have a wound dressing, or medication patch on, please check with the therapist to see if it is all right to wear it during your treatment.

## What else do I need to know?

Do not drink any carbonated beverages (such as soda pop) within 1 hour of the start of your treatment as this could cause stomach pain. Avoid food and drinks with caffeine too.

**Do not smoke** during the course of your treatment. Smoking reduces the amount of oxygen your blood can carry and will reduce the effectiveness of the treatment.

**If you drink alcohol, please discuss this with the doctor.** **Excessive** alcohol intake over the course of your treatment could put you at risk of a seizure.

If you have diabetes, please eat your regular breakfast, and tell the therapist your morning blood sugar result.

Tell the therapist if you did not sleep through the night before your treatment.

## **Frequently asked questions ...**

### **How long does each treatment last?**

A typical treatment lasts between 2 to 2 1/2 hours. The number of treatments you will need depends on why you are having hyperbaric oxygen therapy. Your doctor will discuss your treatment schedule before it starts.

### **Will I need to sign a consent?**

You will be asked to sign a consent form for hyperbaric oxygen therapy. Before this, the doctor will discuss with you and explain the risks and benefits of the treatment.

### **What will I feel during the hyperbaric oxygen treatment?**

As the chamber is pressurized, you may feel a rise in the temperature. You will hear the oxygen coming into the chamber. It may sound like hissing or a waterfall. You will feel a fullness in your ears as your eardrum is exposed to the pressure change. This feeling is similar to that felt in an airplane. The therapist will teach you how to deal with this. Never allow your eardrums to become painful.

Always tell the therapist if you are having problems adjusting to the pressure change. Also, in rare cases, too much oxygen can disturb the brain. Please let the therapist know if you feel anything out of the ordinary (such as vision or hearing changes, nausea or twitching) during your treatment.

### **What do I have to do during the treatment?**

You do not have to do anything during the treatment. During the treatment you may lie on your back or side and you can adjust your position if you wish to. You will be able to watch television during the treatment.

### **What are the side effects?**

Side effects are rare, but some people have nausea, an ear ache, and vision changes during your treatment. Do not change your eyeglass prescription since the vision changes are temporary and your vision will return to normal.

### **Why is my wound painful?**

The treatment is causing an increase in the flow of blood to the wound. This may increase the pain but is a sign of the healing process.

### **What if I cannot keep my appointment?**

If you need to rebook, please call the Hyperbaric Medicine Department as soon as you can.

## **Where is the Hyperbaric Medicine Department located?**

The Hyperbaric Medicine Department is located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Hamilton General Hospital, near the cafeteria.

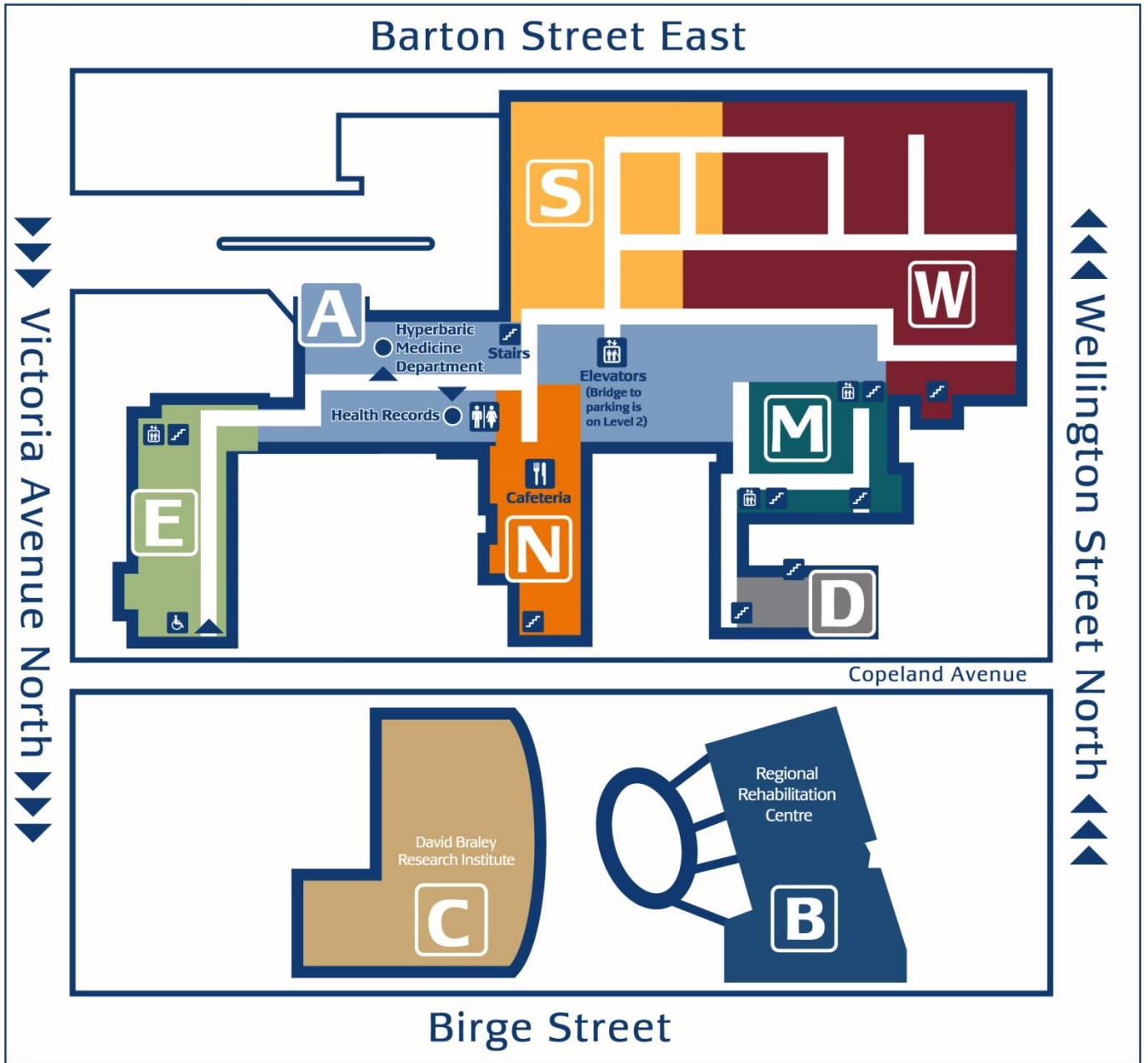
Please see the maps below for directions from both the front and back entrances to the hospital. Follow the signs from the back door, or the elevator when exiting on the first floor.

If you have any questions about your hyperbaric oxygen therapy treatment, please ask your therapist or hyperbaric doctor on the day of your treatment.

We hope you find this pamphlet to be useful. If you have any questions or suggestions regarding this information pamphlet, please talk to the therapist.

# Map

## Level 1 Map





## Useful telephone numbers

Hyperbaric Medicine Department  
905-521-2100, ext. 46426 (46-HBO)  
Fax: 905-577-8230

After hours for urgent appointment related issues only  
905-521-2100, ext. 46344

Juravanski Cancer Centre  
905-521-2100

The Durand Residence (for out of town patients)  
905-525-0338

Initial accommodation arrangements to be made through the  
Jurivinski Cancer Centre, Supportive Care Department  
905-521-2100, ext. 64315

Canadian Cancer Society  
905-575-9220

## Notes

---

---

---

---

---