

# Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy: Necrotizing fasciitis

## What is necrotizing fasciitis (NF)?

**Necrotizing** [neck-roh-TIZE-ing] **fasciitis** [fas-shee-EYE-tiss], or **NF**, is a rare bacterial infection that causes tissues to die. It is a serious condition that can result in death.

## What causes NF?

An NF infection happens when one or more bacteria—most commonly the *Streptococcus* A bacteria—enters an open wound and grows rapidly. The bacteria produce a toxin that chemically dissolves and kills cells, which is why they are often referred to as “flesh-eating bacteria.” This dead and damaged tissue creates a low-oxygen environment that allows the bacteria to grow out of control.

## How is NF treated?

The rapid spread of NF often requires extensive surgery, and even amputation, to avoid death. Antibiotics are used to treat the bacterial infection. Adding **hyperbaric** [hy-per-BARE-ik] **oxygen (HBO2) therapy** to the treatment may reduce the need for amputation and prevent death.



Hyperbaric oxygen is delivered in hyperbaric chambers like the one pictured above.

## How is (HBO2) therapy done?

During hyperbaric oxygen therapy, you will breathe 100% oxygen at pressures 2 to 3 times greater than normal. The oxygen is delivered in a special cylinder or room, called a hyperbaric chamber.

The chamber may be a single-person cylinder filled with 100% oxygen, or it can be a room-size chamber that you share with several people who breathe 100% oxygen through hoods or masks. Both therapies are equally effective.

Hyperbaric oxygen increases the amount of oxygen in your blood that is carried to injured tissues. Higher levels of oxygen help your body grow new blood vessels, repair and build new tissues, and fight the bacteria that cause infections. Studies show that hyperbaric oxygen therapy can help many people with NF.

## What can I do to get the most from my therapies?

You can improve your response to hyperbaric oxygen therapy by doing the following:

- Quit smoking. (Every cigarette makes your blood vessels smaller for 8 hours.)
- Do not drink alcohol 8 hours before or after a therapy session.
- Take your medications exactly as prescribed by your doctor.
- Keep all of your appointments for hyperbaric oxygen therapy. Hyperbaric oxygen has an additive effect. This means the benefits grow the more you go. It may not work as well if you take a long break (more than 3 to 4 days between therapies).
- Eat at least 60 grams of protein every day and take a mineral and vitamin supplement that includes vitamins D and E. Your healthcare team will talk with you about good sources of protein and how much to eat to meet your body's needs.
- Follow your doctor's recommendations about keeping pressure and friction off a skin wound.

### Avoid these things because they can slow down healing:

- Smoking, smokeless tobacco, using alcohol or street drugs, including marijuana.
- Skipping antibiotics or other medications prescribed for you by your doctor.
- Poor nutrition (not getting enough protein, minerals, and vitamins in your diet).
- If you are diabetic, not controlling the level of glucose (sugar) in your blood.

### What about the cost?

Insurance coverage varies, depending on your provider. We recommend you contact your insurance carrier and Intermountain financial services for more information.

To learn more, call us at: \_\_\_\_\_

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