Pulse Oximeter FAQs for Covid Virtual Wards

This list is collated from pilot sites and learning network webinars. It is evolving as others share their learning.

To date only CCG have been able to order from the national free stock. As of this week acute Trusts can now order direct:

"We can distribute oximeters directly to acute trusts on request in batches of 100. They can email england.home@nhs.net and we’ll process these in the same way as oximeters to CCGs (i.e. keeping you informed, asking for basic info for smooth delivery normally within 3 working days)." David Bramley, Deputy Director, NHS @home (interim) – Personalised Care Group, NHS England and NHS Improvement

Pulse Oximeter FAQs How many pulse oximeters do I need?

As a rough guide and suggestions from pilot sites

- 30 per GP practice (8,000 population)
- 300 per acute trust (600,000 population)
- 1 per 25 care home residents

Care homes may have already been supplied with pulse oximeters during the initial pandemic so it is worth checking with your system.

Can patients use their own?

Yes. All products, provided they are CE kite marked, are safe to use in the 90%+ range (they may be less accurate below 90), but don’t use *smartphones* as oximeters https://www.cebm.net/covid-19/question-should-smartphone-appsbe-used-as-oximeters-answer-no/

Make sure you provide education information with any device – see patient information videos and leaflets within the Covid-19 Virtual Ward tool kit.

Can Paediatrics use the devices?

No. Most devices are suitable for people aged 16 and over. Specialist equipment designed for paediatrics and specialist team assessment should be considered. Covid-19 cases requiring escalation are rare in children, but it is important to consider other conditions such as sepsis that require immediate support.