

# Pulse oximeter in the hospital

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## What is a pulse oximeter (pulse ox)?

A pulse oximeter (pulse ox):

- Is a machine that measures the oxygen in your child's blood. It also checks your child's heart rate.
- Helps the doctor know if your child needs oxygen and if so, how much oxygen to give.

A pulse ox has a:

- Machine
- Probe taped to your child's finger, toe, foot or ear. The probe will not hurt or shock your child.
- Thin wire that connects the probe to the machine

Your child may wear a pulse ox all the time or only need his oxygen level checked a few times a day.

## How does it work?

When the machine is turned on, a small red light on the probe glows. The light passes through the skin and measures your child's blood oxygen level and heart rate. Normal levels depend on child's age and condition. Warning alarms are set based on what is correct for your child and based on the doctor's orders.

## What if the machine alarms?

If the machine alarms:

- Use the call light to call your child's nurse.
- Never turn off the alarm or machine.
- False alarms can happen when your child moves. Even then, do not turn off the alarm or machine.
- If the machine is not working, call your child's nurse **right away**.

**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.**

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**