

Simple Mask

● SKILL SNAPSHOT

Purpose

- Delivers moderate-concentration oxygen over the nose and mouth when nasal cannula support is insufficient or unsuitable.

When to use

- Spontaneously breathing patients needing short-term low-flow oxygen, typically more than a cannula but less than a reservoir mask.

Supplies needed

- Simple face mask; oxygen source/flowmeter; tubing; pulse oximeter; skin protection; humidification if ordered.

● PREP + PATIENT SETUP

- Verify order and target SpO₂; assess respiratory status and baseline oxygenation.
- Inspect mask, side ports, tubing, and source.
- Explain fit, communication, eating limitations, and oxygen safety.

● VAULT TIP

- A simple mask needs enough continuous flow to wash exhaled carbon dioxide out through its side ports.

● STEP-BY-STEP

1. Hand hygiene; identify patient; position upright when tolerated.
2. Connect mask tubing to flowmeter and oxygen source.
3. Turn on oxygen before applying. Set prescribed flow; maintain at least 5 L/min for adults to reduce carbon dioxide rebreathing.
4. Place mask over nose and mouth and secure strap around head.
5. Shape nose clip and adjust strap for a comfortable seal without excessive pressure.
6. Keep side exhalation ports open and unobstructed. Never cover them with blankets.
7. Reassess SpO₂, respiratory rate/depth, work of breathing, breath sounds, color, mentation, and comfort.
8. Adjust flow only within order/protocol to achieve target; typical adult simple-mask range is 5-10 L/min.
9. Remove briefly for meals or oral care only with an ordered alternate oxygen device; monitor during changes.
10. Inspect bridge of nose, ears, cheeks, and behind head; pad pressure areas with oxygen-compatible material.
11. Escalate if target SpO₂ is not reached, distress worsens, or the patient cannot tolerate the mask.
12. Maintain oxygen safety and route tubing to prevent kinks, entanglement, and falls.

● SAFETY REMINDERS

- Never run an adult simple mask below 5 L/min.
- Not appropriate for apnea or inadequate ventilation.
- Use caution with vomiting or inability to protect airway.
- Do not use petroleum products near oxygen.

● COMMON MISTAKES

- Flow below minimum.
- Blocked side ports.
- Loose mask with major leaks.
- Removing for meals without alternate oxygen.

● DOCUMENTATION

- Device, flow, and target range.
- Pre/post respiratory assessment and SpO₂.
- Mask fit, skin, and tolerance.
- Alternate device during care/meals.
- Titration, escalation, teaching.