

# Santa Barbara Wellness for Life

Supporting You in Creating a Lifetime of Wellness, Vitality and Longevity

## *Pulse Oximeters*

Pulse/Oxygen meters are a great home tool for becoming clear on what your normal O2 level is and if you are trending in the wrong direction. A normal blood oxygen reading should be between 96 and 100 percent.

The Pulse/Ox meter is a small electronic device that clips onto a finger and measures the saturation of oxygen carried in the red blood cells. The gadget works by passing beams of light through the blood in the finger and calculating oxygen saturation based on the light absorption. Most pharmacies and drugstores sell oximeters, ranging in price from about \$25 to \$60. They are also available online at Amazon.

Many people with COVID-19 can have alarmingly low levels of oxygen in their blood, and they don't even have a clue that their lives are in danger. They don't appear to have any major trouble breathing, so they don't realize how dire their situation may be. These are the people who are most at risk when they do end up at the hospital and usually end up in the ICU.

Most people only begin to notice if they are doing poorly when they are getting down as low as 90%. One of the key benefits of checking your Oxygen levels daily is you will become aware of your normal level, making any downward trends easily detectable. You shouldn't really change much more than a couple of points below your norm at any given time unless you are starting to decline in lung function.

With COVID-19, oxygen depletion may not be apparent immediately because the virus attacks the lungs in such a way that the patient gradually gets less and less oxygen over time. These patients do not feel like they have breathing difficulty because they slowly adjust to the lower oxygen. To compensate, individuals breathe faster and deeper. This change in respiration also increases inflammation in the lungs.

For those who suspect or know they have COVID-19, a pulse oximeter may be a way to catch a drop in blood oxygen before it poses a severe health hazard. This also gives us an earlier starting point for ramping up nutritional and herbal therapy, which so far has allowed us to quickly reverse oxygen levels as low as 87%.

While not a substitute for a visit to the doctor, a pulse oximeter is a simple and effective way to catch potentially life-threatening complications of COVID-19.