Pulse oximeter readings: what they mean

These levels come from NHS England home-monitoring guidance. If your GP or care team has given you different targets, follow theirs.

Oxygen level (SpO2)	What to do
95% to 100%	Ideal. Carry on as advised.
93% or 94%	Check again within an hour. If it is still 93% or 94%, contact NHS 111 or your GP practice.
92% or lower	Check again straight away. If it is still 92% or lower, call 999 or go to A&E.

If your usual level is below 95% and it stays lower than usual, contact NHS 111 for advice and have your readings ready.

Getting a good reading

- Rest for a few minutes first. Use a warm finger, with no nail varnish or false nails.
- Keep your hand still, at chest level, and wait until the number settles.
- If you have darker skin, the reading can be higher than your real level. Watch how you feel, not just the number.

Diary

Date	Time	Oxygen level (%)	Pulse	How is your breathing? (better, same, worse)

Call 999 or go to A&E if you are too breathless to finish a short sentence at rest, your breathing suddenly gets worse, you cough up blood, you feel cold and sweaty with pale or blotchy skin, you collapse or faint, or you become confused or very drowsy, whatever the reading says.

Based on NHS England home-monitoring guidance (self-monitoring diary, 2022) and MHRA advice. Full guide: digitalhealthcoachuk.net/pulse-oximeters/.
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