

books or magazines, or watch a movie. The hood will be removed twice allowing you to have a break. You can use the toilet or have a drink during this time.

Depressurisation – This is when the chamber returns to normal pressure. You don't have to equalise ears during this phase and you can continue to watch a movie or read. The complete treatment is approximately 2 hours.

Are there any ill-effects from treatment?

There are a couple of risks and rare complications which can involve the ears or eyes. Difficulty clearing your ears may lead to ear drum injury. We will try to prevent this by guiding you during equalisation. Sometimes grommets need to be inserted into the ear to help the process. Visual changes sometimes occur after 20-30 daily treatments and are usually temporary. Some patients do report being tired or lethargic after HBOT. There are other less common risks and complications which the doctor will discuss in detail with you during your initial assessment.

How long will I require treatment?

Each treatment takes about two hours with the number of treatments varying depending on what condition is being treated. Some emergency conditions require only one or two treatments. The planned initial course of therapy will be discussed with you and explained by the doctor. Patients will usually attend daily, 6-7 days a week. The number of treatments may vary from 1 to 60.

What about accommodation?

Most patients will be treated as an outpatient. If coming from outside the Townsville region, you should liaise with the travel office at your local hospital to be eligible for assistance with travelling and accommodation cost. There is a range of accommodation available in Townsville and our administration staff maybe able to help with organising this.

Further information

For further information regarding the Hyperbaric Medicine Service please contact us on 4433 2080.

Townsville
Hospital
and Health
Service



Hyperbaric Medicine Unit

Information for patients and visitors of
The Townsville Hospital



This patient information brochure supports National Safety and Quality Health Service Standard 2 - Partnering with Consumers



The Hyperbaric unit is located on the ground floor of the main hospital block at the helicopter pad/ambulance end of the long main corridor. There is a drop off area at the side entrance close to the unit. There are also volunteers at the main entrance who can assist you to find the unit. Paid public parking is available in the large car park at the front of the hospital.

The Hyperbaric Chamber

The current chamber consists of three interconnecting rooms (chambers) that are pressurised with air. The three chambers allow us to treat a routine group of patients and if required, an emergency treatment at the same time. The main chamber seats up to seven patients in comfortable recliners. Trolleys are available for patients unable to sit. The middle chamber has a toilet and wash basin for patient use during treatment. A registered nurse is in attendance during all patient treatments.

What is Hyperbaric Oxygen therapy?

Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) is the administration of 100% oxygen at greater than atmospheric pressure. This allows more oxygen to be dissolved in the blood and tissues than would be possible breathing the same oxygen lying in a hospital bed. HBOT allows poorly nourished, damaged or infected tissue to benefit from the delivery of a high concentration of oxygen. This encourages body tissue regrow and heal by enhancing cell function and increasing the blood supply.

What are the common conditions that we treat?

- Decompression Illness (Bends)
- Compromised skin grafts and flaps
- Crush injuries
- Gas Gangrene/necrotizing infection
- Bone Infections
- Radiation tissue injury
- Non-healing wounds
- Vascular/diabetic wounds
- Carbon monoxide poisoning
- Retinal artery occlusion
- Acute hearing loss

What do I need before starting treatment?

The Hyperbaric doctor will conduct a medical examination and determine if HBOT is suitable for you. On your first visit to the hyperbaric medicine service please bring a list of your current medications with you.

Certain tests that may be required before commencing HBOT such as chest x-rays, blood tests, and vision tests.

If you are being treated for a wound, photos and an assessment of the oxygen in the tissues around the wound may be needed. As an outpatient your wound care will be performed by the nursing staff.

There are no age limits for having HBOT. We have successfully treated babies and people in their nineties.

What happens before and during treatment?

At prearranged times you present to the Hyperbaric Medicine Unit (HMU) where you change into 100% cotton clothing supplied by the unit. We have lockers in which you can place your possessions. There is a comfortable waiting area where you can sit and relax while you are waiting. If you are a diabetic we will take your blood sugar each day. You will be measured for a hood and neck seal which will allow you to breathe 100% oxygen during your treatment. When you enter the chamber we will make you comfortable and position your neck seal. In some cases, the hood and neck seal cannot be used and a mask system will be used in its place.

Treatments are divided into 3 phases

Pressurisation – When the doors to the chamber close you will feel a pressure change in your ears which you will need to relieve by ‘clearing your ears’. A nurse will guide you through techniques to do this which may include swallowing, chewing gum, or pinching your nose closed and ‘popping’ your ears, much like on a plane.

Treatment pressure - When the chamber reaches treatment pressure the nurse will place the clear hood over your neck seal and you will start breathing 100% oxygen. During treatment you can do crosswords, read