



# Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy for Brain Injury, Cerebral Palsy, and Stroke

*Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality*

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### Overview

Hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT) is the inhalation of 100 percent oxygen inside a hyperbaric chamber that is pressurized to greater than 1 atmosphere (atm). HBOT causes both mechanical and physiologic effects by inducing a state of increased pressure and hyperoxia. HBOT is typically administered at 1 to 3 atm. While the duration of an HBOT session is typically 90 to 120 minutes, the duration, frequency, and cumulative number of sessions have not been standardized.

HBOT is administered in two primary ways, using a monoplace chamber or a multiplace chamber. The monoplace chamber is the less costly option for initial setup and operation but provides less opportunity for patient interaction while in the chamber. Multiplace chambers allow medical personnel to work in the chamber and care for acute patients to some extent. The entire multiplace chamber is pressurized, so medical personnel may require a controlled decompression, depending on how long they were exposed to the hyperbaric air environment.

The purpose of this report is to provide a guide to the strengths and limitations of the evidence about the use of HBOT to treat patients who have brain injury, cerebral palsy, and stroke. Brain injury can be caused by an external physical force (also known as traumatic brain injury, or TBI); rapid acceleration or deceleration of the head; bleeding within or around the brain; lack of sufficient oxygen to the brain; or toxic substances passing through the blood-brain barrier. Brain injury results in temporary or permanent impairment of cognitive, emotional, and/or physical functioning. Cerebral palsy refers to a motor deficit that usually manifests itself by 2

years of age and is secondary to an abnormality of at least the part of the brain that relates to motor function. Stroke refers to a sudden interruption of the blood supply to the brain, usually caused by a blocked artery or a ruptured blood vessel, leading to an interruption of homeostasis of cells, and symptoms such as loss of speech and loss of motor function.

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