

Tracheostomy

Patient Information



What is a tracheostomy?

A tracheostomy is an operative procedure that creates an opening in your neck to allow air direct entry into your trachea (windpipe). The resulting hole in your neck is known as a stoma. This procedure lets you breathe through the tube instead of your mouth or nose.

When is tracheostomy required?

A tracheostomy is needed if the usual route for breathing is not functioning. It is most commonly performed in patients with the following issues:

- Swelling in the throat that blocks the airway
- An object or growth that blocks the airway
- Respiratory failure requiring ventilatory support
- Paralysis of the throat that affects breathing
- Cancer of the neck
- Sleep apnea
- Surgery of the larynx (voice box)

What are the components of a tracheostomy tube?

A complete set of tracheostomy tube consists of a neck plate, which rests on your neck, with an opening in the middle over the stoma. This neck plate has holes on either side for tube ties which helps hold the tracheostomy tube in place. Additionally, the tube has an inner and an outer cannula. The outer cannula is the main body of the tube while the inner cannula can be removed to allow for cleaning of the tube. You should also use tracheostomy covers to protect your airway from irritants such as dust.

What are the items required for tracheostomy care at home?

- A complete set of tracheostomy tube
- Tracheostomy ties
- Tracheostomy suction tubes
- A suction machine
- Oxygen (if required)

How do I take care of the tracheostomy at home?

- Wash your hands before you start.
- Open the tracheostomy inner cannula anti-clockwise.
- Clean the inner cannula of the tracheostomy tube with running water and a small brush after every 6-8 hours or when required. Make sure the tube is free from secretions at all times.
- After cleaning the inner cannula and drying it, close it clockwise. Make sure that it locks properly.
- Clean the sides of the tracheostomy with a piodine swab and change the tracheostomy ties every day.
- Clean the sides of the stoma with piodine. You will need the suction apparatus will be required to clean the tracheostomy secretions
- The tracheostomy tube should be regularly checked to ensure that the tube remains open and does not get blocked by secretions. A blocked tube can cause difficulty in breathing and even death.

Please note the following:

- You need to clean the tracheostomy tube, your stoma and the skin around the stoma.
- If you do not take care of your tracheostomy, it will lead to choking, blockage of the tube, hematoma formation (blood accumulation), infection and other complications of surgery.

Tips for eating with a tracheotomy tube

Your doctor will let you know if you can eat through your mouth. If you can:

- Sit straight, eat slowly and chew food completely before you swallow.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Fluids help thin your mucus and prevent the formation of mucus plugs.
- Eat a diet containing fibre and fruits to prevent constipation.

What if I choke on food?

- If you aspirate food, which means it goes into your airway, stay calm
- Try to cough so the food comes out.
- If food is not coming out, immediately report to the Emergency Department.

Important instructions

Call your doctor right away if you experience any of the following:

- Shortness of breath, wheezing, coughing or if you choke on your food.
- Fever.
- Redness, pain, or bleeding from tracheostomy site.
- Swelling around the tracheostomy tube or if the tracheostomy comes out.
- Smelly, bloody or thick mucus.

If you have any questions related to your disease or care of your tracheostomy, please feel free to ask your doctor or nurse.