

Before You Go Home with a Tracheostomy

Your surgeons made a new pathway for air (called an airway) to flow into and out of your lungs when you breathe. They made a hole (called a stoma) in your neck and put in a tracheostomy tube (also called a trach tube). Air flows into and out of the lungs through the trach tube instead of your nose and mouth.

You need to know how to take care of your trach tube before you leave the hospital. Here are the things you must know how to do before you go home:

Activity	My nurse has shown me how to do this. <i>(Nurse initials)</i>	I am comfortable doing this. <i>(Patient and/or caregiver initials)</i>
I can suction my trach tube.		
I can replace the inner cannula.		
I can clean the skin around my trach tube.		
I can put the trach tube back in if it comes out.		

I confirm that I can complete these tracheostomy home care steps. I have reviewed all the steps with the discharge nurse.

Patient/caregiver signature _____

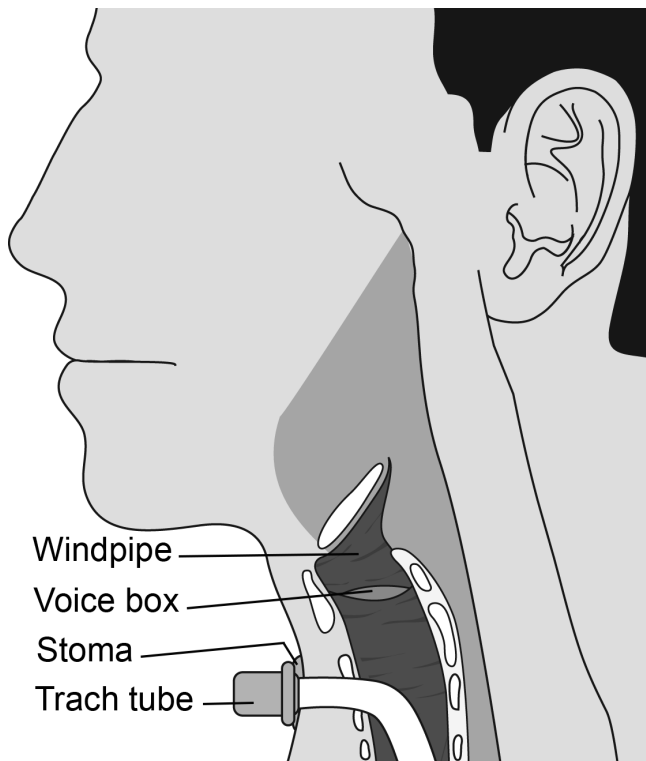
Date _____

Discharge nurse signature _____

Date _____

Your surgeons made a new pathway for air (called an airway) to flow into and out of your lungs when you breathe. They made a hole (called a stoma) in your neck and put in a tracheostomy tube (also called a trach tube). Air flows into and out of the lungs through the trach tube instead of your nose and mouth.

Your care team taught you how to take care of your trach tube and the area around it while you were in the hospital. These instructions will help you and your caregiver remember when you are at home.



Location of tracheostomy tube (trach tube)

If you have trouble breathing through your trach tube

If you feel like you can't catch your breath, stay calm. Take some deep breaths and relax. The feeling could be from anxiety and will often go away.

If you still have trouble, try to clear your trach tube.

- Cough to help move mucus out of your airway.
- Suction your trach tube. Follow the instructions on page 2.
- Most trach tubes have an inner cannula. This is another tube that fits inside the main trach tube. If you have an inner cannula, you may need to clean or replace it.

If these steps don't help, put in a new trach tube. Follow the directions in the *If Your Trach Tube Comes Out* factsheet.

If you have trouble breathing after replacing your trach tube, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency department right away.

General tips

Keep your stoma and trach tube dry. **When you shower or bathe, do not let any water get near or in the trach tube opening.** Never let the stoma or tube go under water.

Usually, the nose moistens the air you breathe. With a tracheostomy, you need to use a humidifier when you are at home. When you leave the house, there is a device you can put over the trach tube. Ask your care team about the best way to moisten the air you breathe.

When you get home from the hospital, call your local fire department non-emergency number. Let them know a person with a trach tube lives at your address and phone number. This helps them be ready if you ever need to call 911.

continued on page 2

If you have questions or concerns about your trach tube, call

Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
801-587-4566

Monday–Friday after 4:30 p.m., weekends, holidays
801-581-2121 Ask for the ear, nose, and throat doctor.

Supplies you will need

Here is a list of supplies you will need to care for your tracheostomy at home:

- Suction machine. Before you leave the hospital, your care team will set up rental of a suction machine from a health care company. The person who delivers the machine will show you how to run it.
- Suction tubes, also called catheters
- Y connector to control suction
- Premeasured “bullets” of saline solution to help thin mucus
- Cleaning supplies such as gauze, saline solution, sterile or distilled water, and tools to clean inside your trach tube and inner cannula

Your care team will give you a starter kit of supplies. After that, the health care company that brings the suction machine will bring the supplies you need. They may not look exactly the same as pictured in this factsheet. If this happens, ask the person who delivers the supplies for instructions about the type of machine and supplies you have.

How do I take care of my trach tube?

You need to clean your trach tube and airway at least once a day. Also clean it whenever it becomes hard to breathe or you feel like mucus has collected.

Follow these steps to clean your tube and airway. The picture on page 3 may be helpful.

1. Work in a clean space near a sink and mirror. Make sure you have plenty of light. You need these supplies:
 - Suction machine
 - Clean suction tube
2. Wash your hands with soap and warm water.
3. Get ready to suction.
 - a. Turn on the suction machine.
 - b. Put the suction tube on the machine using the Y connector. Note: One arm of the Y connector has no tube attached.
4. Do the suction.
 - a. Put the tip of the suction tube into your trach tube. Look in the mirror to help get it started. Slide the tube down until you start to cough.
This will be about half the length of the suction tube.

- b. Cover the open arm of the Y connector with your thumb.
- c. With your other hand, slowly pull the suction tube out of your trach tube, rolling it between your fingers as it comes out. It should take 5–10 seconds to get the tip of the suction tube out of your trach tube.
- d. If your mucus is too thick, the suction may not work. If this happens, empty a saline solution bullet into your trach tube.
- e. If you think there is still mucus in your airway after doing the suction, relax and breathe for a few minutes before trying to use the suction tube again.
- f. When you have finished, turn off the suction machine. Throw away the used suction tube.

You may gag a little while doing the suction. This is normal.

You may see a faint tinge of red blood mixed with the mucus. This is normal.

How do I take care of the skin around my trach tube?

You need to keep the area around your tracheostomy site clean. Clean it at least once a day or more often, if you need to.

If your trach tube has an inner cannula, you also need to clean or replace it. Your care team will teach you how before you leave the hospital.

When to call your care team

Watch for these signs of possible infection or other problems with your trach tube:

- Fever higher than 100.3°F
- Redness or swelling on neck getting worse
- More than one cup of bright red blood in the mucus

If any of these things happen, call

Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

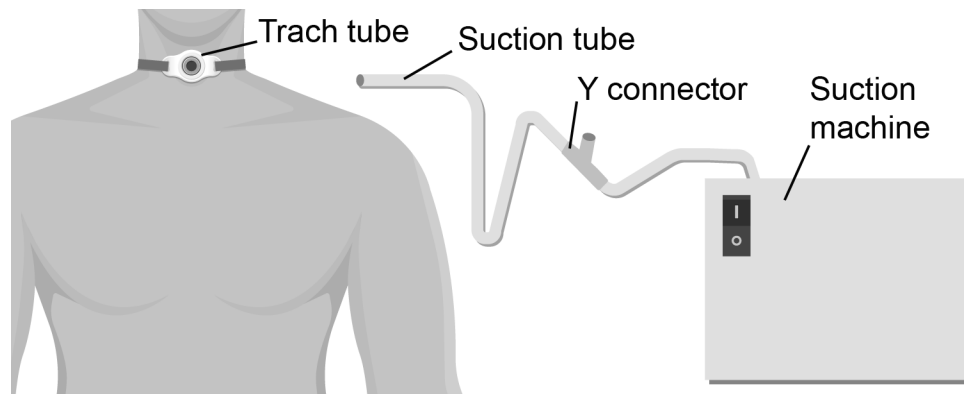
801-587-4566

Monday–Friday after 4:30 p.m., weekends, and holidays

Call 801-581-2121.

Ask for the ear, nose, and throat doctor.

continued on page 3



Suction machine set-up

Your Notes

If your trach tube comes out or needs to be replaced, you must put in a new one right away. This factsheet tells you how to put in a new trach tube.

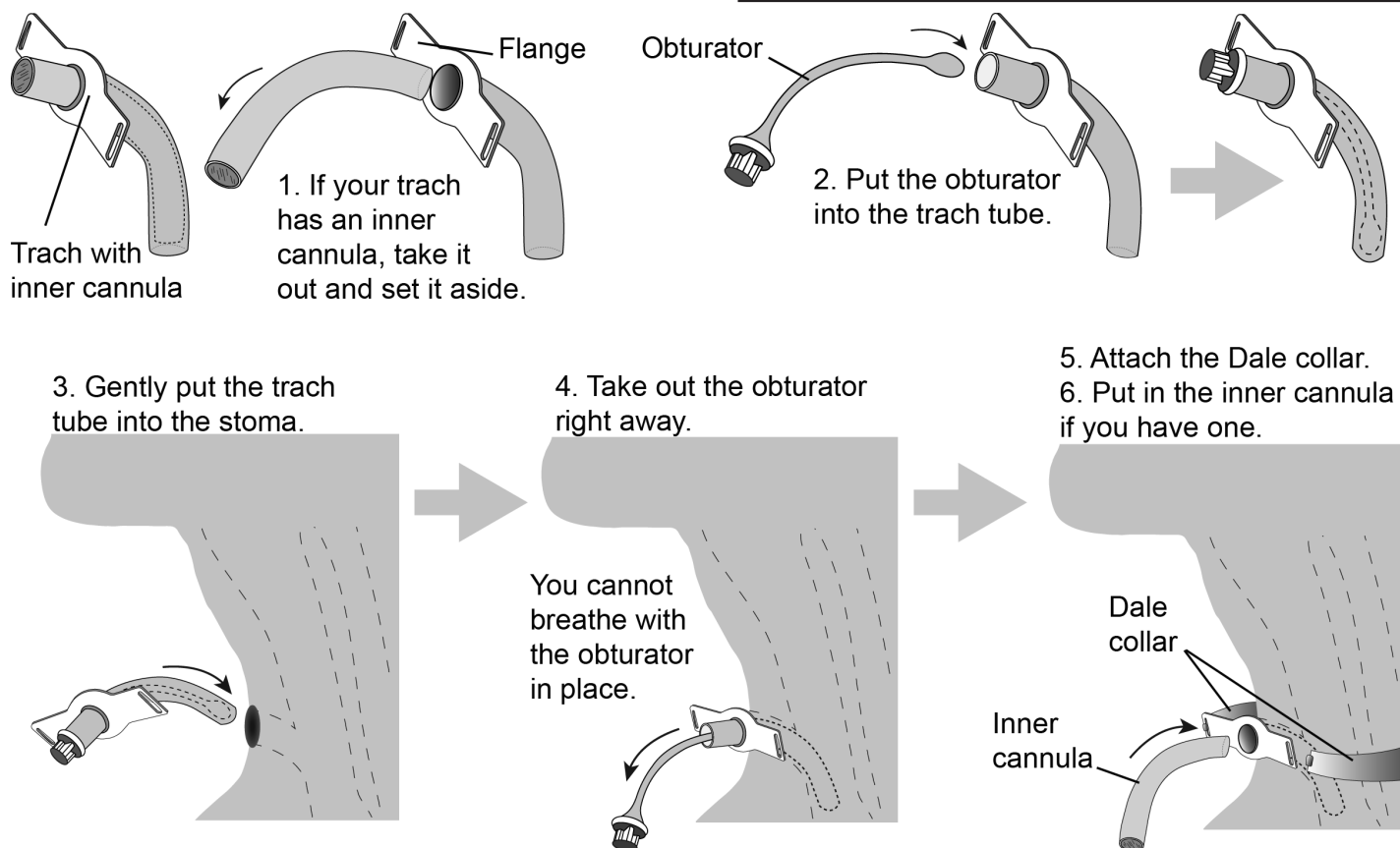
ALWAYS keep these supplies on hand

Your care team will give you a starter kit of these supplies for your trach tube before you go home from the hospital. If you need your trach tube for a long time, the health care company that brings your suction machine will bring many of the supplies you need. They may not look exactly the same as pictured in this factsheet. If this happens, ask the person who delivers the supplies to give you instructions for supplies you have.

- Replacement trach tube, usually with inner cannula
- Obturator
- Dale collars

How do I put in a new trach tube?

Follow the steps pictured below if your trach tube comes out or you need a new one.



If you have trouble breathing through your trach tube, follow these steps:

First, try to clear the trach tube by coughing. Then suction your trach tube. If you have an inner cannula, try cleaning or replacing it.

If you still have trouble breathing, put in a new trach tube following the directions in this factsheet.

If you have trouble breathing after replacing your trach tube, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency department right away.

If you have questions or concerns about replacing your trach tube, call

Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
801-587-4566

Monday–Friday after 4:30 p.m., weekends,
and holidays
801-581-2121

Ask for the ear, nose, and throat doctor.