

Keeping safe

It will be necessary for you to carry some essential equipment, supplies and information (see list below) with you **at all times** in order to deal **promptly** with any problems that may occur.

Emergency Tracheostomy Box containing:

- ✓ a spare tracheostomy tube the same size and type as the one you have in place
- ✓ a spare tracheostomy tube a size smaller than the one you have in place
- ✓ spare inner cannula
- ✓ tracheostomy securing tapes / ties / collar
- ✓ scissors
- ✓ tracheostomy dressing
- ✓ two sachets lubricating gel
- ✓ gloves (for suctioning)
- ✓ a spare humidification device (eg. HME / Tracheostomy stoma bib)
- ✓ inner tube cleaning sponge/brush
- ✓ Trachi-Pass
- ✓ other equipment advised (if applicable):

Optional items**

- one 10ml syringe
- bag valve mask
- cuff pressure manometer
- if an uncuffed tube is in situ: a spare cuffed tracheostomy tube a size smaller than the one in situ (for emergency oxygenation and ventilation)
- other equipment advised (if applicable):

✓ Portable suction unit and suction catheters

Make sure the suction unit is fully charged and working, and is accessible at all times.

** These are items are optional and will depend on individual hospital practice and patient needs.

- Always make sure that your tracheostomy tube is firmly held in place using the securing tapes.
- If your tracheostomy tube has an inner cannula, always ensure that you have this in place. Keep it clear of secretions by cleaning it when required and as you have been instructed. **Make sure you always have a spare inner cannula with you.**
- If you have a tracheostomy tube with an inflation cuff, ensure that you maintain and check the cuff pressure as you have been instructed.
- You are advised to let the local electricity board know that you rely on medical equipment which has to be charged electrically. They can place your home on an 'at risk' list. They can also warn you in advance of any planned power cuts and reconnect your electricity supply as a priority.

Useful telephone numbers

In an emergency dial 999

Tracheostomy Specialist Nurse:

District Nurse / Community Nursing Team:

GP:

Suppliers:

**Treatment Hospital
(ENT Department/Ward):**

Other:

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Living with a tracheostomy

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Patient and carer information



Acknowledgement: pictures taken from the 'Community Tracheostomy Care Video' (available on YouTube), produced by Laurentiu Huianu and NNUH Medical Illustration Department.

Having a tracheostomy will have some impact on your day-to-day life. However, it is possible with some careful planning to adapt your activities and choices so that you are not unnecessarily restricted. The following practical advice will help you adjust to life at home with a tracheostomy.

Equipment and supplies

- You will be given supplies and equipment to manage your tracheostomy at home. You will need to decide where you will store them. We advise setting aside a place within your home, and to make sure that everyone involved with the care of the tracheostomy knows where they are kept.
- Regularly check your supplies to avoid running out.
- Ensure that your suction units are fully charged, working and accessible.

Avoiding hazards

It is important to be aware of the activities and choices which should be avoided because they can be hazardous to anyone with a tracheostomy. Here are some safety tips and advice:

- Choose clothing with loose-fitting necks and front openings to ensure easy access to the tracheostomy tube.
- It is important to wear the commercial covering(s) that you are provided with to prevent substances or objects accidentally entering the tracheostomy tube (such as sand, dust, or hair during a haircut or shaving).
- Use a water guard covering when taking a shower or bath to protect against water or other toiletries entering the tracheostomy tube.
- Avoid swimming as there is a very high risk of water entering the tracheostomy tube.

- Avoid contact sports, because there is a very high risk of the tracheostomy tube becoming dislodged or falling out.
- Try to avoid substances such as powders or aerosols (including talcum powder and hairspray). If these are inhaled via the tracheostomy tube they can cause airway/ chest damage or infection.
- Try to avoid smoky or polluted places. Particles may enter the tracheostomy tube which can irritate the airway and cause coughing and increased secretion production.
- Try to avoid contact with animals with fine hair. The hair can easily be inhaled via the tracheostomy tube.
- The tracheostomy tube will bypass the filtering and humidifying mechanisms that you have in your nose. This will make you more susceptible to common colds, viruses and influenza. These illnesses may increase the amount of mucus and secretions that you produce from your tracheostomy tube resulting in the need for more suctioning. Please discuss the possibility of a flu or pneumovax jab with your GP.
- Changes in temperature or climate (such as cold, dry atmospheres or central heating) can irritate the airways and dry out secretions. This makes it more difficult to cough and clear these secretions effectively. You may need to use a different form of humidification or use nebulisers to compensate for this. Talk to your Tracheostomy Specialist Nurse, Community Nursing Team or GP for advice.