



Understanding Tracheostomy Care for your Child



What do I need to know for breathing emergencies?

A trach must not be plugged or displaced.

This can block the airway and your child will not be able to breathe.

Call 911 if you need help.

| Problem: | Actions (Move to next step if not successful): |
|--|---|
| Child becomes pale or blue | Use breathing bag to give breaths to trach Check oxygen or ventilator and suction |
| Air will not enter trach from breathing bag | Attempt to suction Try change trach (same size first, then one size smaller) Cover stoma; use mask to mouth and nose to give breaths with breathing bag |
| Tube falls out | If tube falls out, place obturator in tube and re-insert |
| Rapid breathing, looks anxious or restless, nasal flaring, chest or neck is sucking in | Check oxygen reading on oximeter Provide breathing with bag and suction Check for fever |

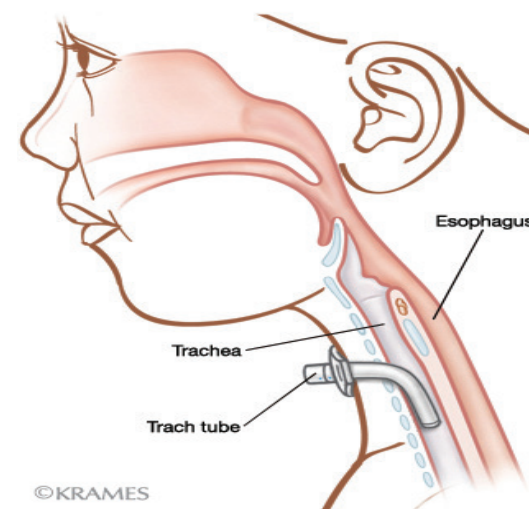
How does a tracheostomy (trach) work?

What is a tracheostomy?

A tracheostomy is an opening created for air to flow into the lungs.

Reasons to have a trach can include:

- Use of a long-term ventilator (machine to help with breathing)
- Blocked airway because of an accident, paralysis, surgery, or other problem
- Frequent need to suction (clear the airway)
- Blockage of airway during sleep, known as sleep apnea



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A tracheostomy creates a shorter path to the lungs by an opening in the neck into the windpipe (trachea).

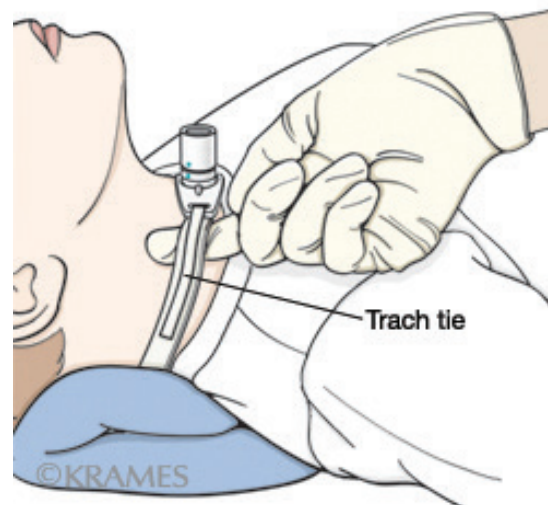
Use the notes section to write down the type and size of trach and any other helpful care facts you want to remember.

How do I take care of the area around the stoma (trach opening)?

Keep skin clean and dry. Do skin cares every 12 hours and as needed. Trach ties hold the tube in place. Ties should not be too tight or too loose. In many children, 1 finger-width is advised.

Trach care supplies needed:

- Sterile cotton-tipped applicators
- Sterile water, sterile gloves
- Normal saline vials (pink jets or bullets)
- Suction equipment
- Trach ties
- Medicine cup or small container
- Trach dressing, if applicable
- Skin barrier, if applicable
- Neck roll



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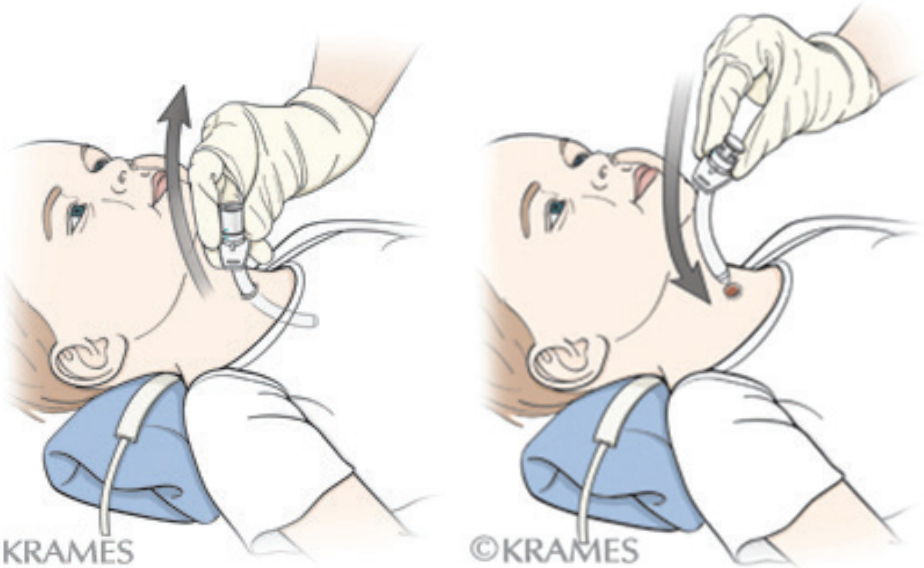
You will be told how often you should clean around the trach.
Supplies may not need to be sterile.

What do I need to know to change a trach?

Trach change

The trach tube is changed for cleaning or if there are problems breathing. Change the trach at least _____.

Have all emergency supplies, obturator, syringe, new trach and a smaller trach ready. It is a good idea to have a second person available whenever you change the trach.



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What is an oximeter?

A device that measures the oxygen level is called an oximeter. This may be connected to a finger or foot. You may notice a red light on the tip. Your doctor will tell you what this number should be.

What is a resuscitation (breathing) bag?

A resuscitation bag helps supply oxygen into the lungs. A resuscitation bag is used to assist breathing. This is very important when a child is not able to breathe without help. A mask is attached when someone does not have a trach or if attempts to clear a trach do not work.

How do I work with oxygen?

Oxygen is dangerous around sources of fire. **Do not allow** smoking in your home. Do not have any open flames such as burning candles. Children who are old enough to cook should not do so while wearing oxygen. Oxygen tanks and mixers should be handled with caution. Use the prescribed dose of oxygen.

The airway must be kept moist at all times. Humidity may be applied to the trach and can be used with or without oxygen. A heat moisture exchanger, called an HME or nose, helps to keep the airway from becoming too dry and protects food or water from entering from the outside into the trach during play or bath time. Change as needed or advised by your equipment provider.

How do I use a speaking valve?

If your child is verbal, talking is not possible at first. With a trach, air does not flow near the vocal cords. Some trachs can be adapted later with a valve to allow for speech. The special valve is sometimes called Passy-Muir or PMV.

How do I troubleshoot breathing problems?

| Problem: | Actions: |
|---|---|
| Wheezing, coughing | Trach may need to be suctioned; Give reliever (nebulizer or inhaler) if you have been advised. |
| Trach ties become loose | Check tightness of tie. Keep one finger width. Replace ties as needed. |
| Mucous build-up, mucous that is thick, smelly, yellow, or green | Suction, check temperature, use saline if needed, and inner cannula or trach tube may need to be changed. |

What should be in a Go bag?

You will want to be comfortable leaving your home. Bringing your “Go bag” will help you be prepared. This will include what you need for emergencies as well.

These supplies include:

- An extra same size tube with the ties already in place
- A tracheostomy tube that is a size smaller than the one that your child uses with the ties already in place in case the stoma shrinks during an emergency
- Suction machine (handheld or battery powered)
- Suction kits
- Resuscitation bag (with face mask and trach adapter)
- Medical scissors, adhesive bandages
- Gauze pads, antiseptic wipes
- Water-soluble lubricant such as K-Y® Jelly (**never** use an oil-based lubricant such as Vaseline® petroleum jelly)
- Cotton-tipped applicators
- Vials of saline
- Sterile gloves (even though you may be using a clean technique)
- Plastic clean-up bag
- Flashlight
- Cell phone - charged



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