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**THIS INFORMATION SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED AS MEDICAL ADVICE. IT IS NOT TO BE USED IN PLACE OF A VISIT WITH A DOCTOR, NURSE OR OTHER HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL. IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR INDIVIDUAL MEDICAL SITUATION, PLEASE CONSULT WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL.**

Sonia Boccardi, MScN, CNS and Michele Gouthro, RN.
18-08-2011
Introduction

This booklet has been given to you to help you learn how to care for your tracheostomy. It will be used throughout your hospital stay to provide instructions on the basic care of a tracheostomy tube and will be yours to keep at home as a reference guide.

This book gives the fundamental instructions for many parts of tracheostomy care such as tracheostomy tie change, inner cannula tube change and general safety guidelines. This book is to be used only as an informational guide line. If your doctor’s instructions are different than what is printed in this book, follow your doctor’s instructions.

The hospital staff is here to help you learn to care for your tracheostomy. Teaching will begin, with you and your family, right after your surgery and will continue every day until you are able to do the care alone. You are encouraged to ask questions and help the nurses with as much of your care as possible. When you are medically stable and you are comfortable with the care of your tracheostomy tube, you will be ready to go home.

Many people live at home with tracheostomies. With the help of the nursing staff and this booklet, you will be able to go home with confidence and peace of mind.
Home Care

Trach care is important to prevent stoma infections and to keep the inner cannulas from plugging.

Cleaning the Inner Cannula

You will need to clean your inner cannula at least three to four times a day. If your secretions are thick, you may need to clean it more often. You will need the following things to clean your inner cannula:

Supplies
- Hydrogen peroxide (found at local pharmacy)
- Clean bowl
- Pipe cleaners or cotton tipped swabs (does not have to be sterile)
- Replacement inner cannula (list of suppliers will be given to you)

Step by Step
1. First you will have to wash your hands.
2. Remove the inner cannula.
3. Place the inner cannula in a bowl and pour enough hydrogen peroxide to cover the cannula and let it soak for a few minutes. This will loosen the secretions.
4. Use a pipe cleaner or cotton swab and clean the inside and outside of the cannula.
5. Rinse it off with tap water and shake off the excess.
6. Reinsert your inner cannula and lock into place. You should hear a tiny click and you’ll know it’s in place.

Changing your Trach Ties

The tracheostomy ties only need to be changed when they become dirty. You will need a buddy to hold the tracheostomy tube in place so it does not accidentally come out while you are changing the ties.

Supplies
- ½ inch wide twill tape or Velcro ties (list of suppliers will be given to you)
- Scissors
- A buddy

Step by Step
- Wash your hands.
- Thread in clean ties through one side of the flange, loosely pass them around the neck and thread through the other side of the flange.
- Cut old ties.
- Tie both ends into a knot. DO NOT tie into a BOW as it may loosen and cause accidental dislodgment of the tracheostomy appliance.
**Eating With a Trach**

You can still eat many of the same foods that you did before your tracheostomy. But there are a few things to keep in mind. You may be advised to avoid certain foods. Follow the recommendations of the dietitian.

**Tips:**
- If you have a cuffed tracheostomy, find out if it needs to be deflated first. (Your dietician and speech therapist will know.)
- Sit up straight, eat slowly and chew very well before you swallow.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- If you have a speaking valve, put it on before you eat. Follow the speech therapist’s recommendations.

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**Swimming**

Specialized equipment is available that can be used to stop water from going into the stoma for swimming. Once a tracheostomy has been performed, it is not possible to swim without using specialized equipment unless the stoma site has healed completely.

**DO NOT SWIM WITHOUT YOUR DOCTOR’S APPROVAL.**

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**Keeping your Stoma and Skin Clean**

The tracheostomy ties only need to be changed when they become dirty. You will need a buddy to hold the tracheostomy tube in place so it does not accidentally come out while you are changing the ties.

**Supplies**
- ½ inch wide twill tape or Velcro ties
  (list of suppliers will be given to you)
- Scissors
- A buddy

**Step by Step**
- Wash your hands
- Thread in clean ties through one side of the flange, loosely pass them around the neck and thread through the other side of the flange.
- Cut old ties.
- Tie both ends into a knot.
  DO NOT tie into a BOW as it may loosen and cause accidental dislodgment of the tracheostomy appliance.

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Showering

People with a tracheostomy can still shower; you just have to keep the water out of the inner cannula. If the water goes in, it goes straight to your lungs. Take a bath instead of a shower. Keep the bath water to a minimum. If you really have to take a shower, point the water at your stomach area or lower, or turn your back to the spray. There are special devices that can be bought to shield your trach at home care suppliers.

Winter Protection

The percentage of humidity in the air significantly decreases in the winter and you might find that your secretions are thicker and your stoma might be a little more irritated. This is because the air that you breathe is no longer being warmed or moistened through your nasal passages. When you go outside, make sure to wear a scarf made from non fibrous material such as cotton, just make sure you don’t tie it too tight around your trach.

Travelling

There is no reason why you cannot travel with a tracheostomy. Adequate insurance provisions will need to be made to ensure that you can be flown home quickly if necessary.

Take enough supplies to last the duration of your trip as well as a few extras just in case. If flying, advise the airline of the equipment that will be taken on board, either as carry on or checked luggage. Feel free to request oxygen that is readily available on board.

The travel bag should always include:

- Gloves
- Normal saline instillations (found at local pharmacy)
- Tissues
- Scissors
- Extra inner cannulas (same size and one size smaller)
- Trach ties/Velcro strap
- Disposable humidity devices
- Bulb syringe
- Oxygen (if needed)
- Medications
- Bottles/food/snacks (check with airline/airport for allowable formats).
  If you need to carry liquid supplements, you should get a letter from your physician.
Learning to communicate

Having a tracheostomy may mean learning a new way to communicate with others. If you cannot talk, you will learn new ways to express your thoughts and feelings with others.

If you can’t talk, you still can communicate. Tips below will help you to do this.

- Carry a pen and paper, chalk board or wipe off board
- Use flash cards with basic things as bathroom or hungry
- A letter board with the alphabet
- Agree on meanings of gestures with family and friends
- Facial expressions

Home Humidity

Humidity is a must and is especially important the first month after your surgery. Normally, your mouth and nose heats, moisturizes and filters the air that you breathe. Since your tracheostomy detours your mouth and nose, additional moisture and filtering are now needed. Not enough humidity, results in thick and crusty secretions, which may result in trouble breathing. The amount of fluids you drink, the air in your home and the weather outside all change the amount of humidity. So here are several ways to increase the amount of humidity

Fluid Intake

It is important that you drink a lot of fluids if there are no restrictions imposed by your doctor. Drinking a lot of liquids will help to keep the mucus thin. It is especially important to be sure you get enough liquids when you are sick with any infection, especially vomiting, diarrhea or fever-type illnesses.

Room/Home Humidifiers

Heating your home in the winter and air conditioning in the summer can dry out the air. Room humidifiers can be helpful, but they must be washed, rinsed and refilled every day to prevent bacteria growth. Follow the manufacturer’s guidelines for cleaning your humidifier. Place a humidifier by your bedside at night. Air humidity should be around 40-50%.
Tracheotomy and Passy Muir Valve

The Passy Muir Valve is used to help you speak more normally. This one-way valve attaches to the outside opening of the tracheostomy tube and allows air to pass into the tracheostomy, but not through it. The valve opens when you breathe in. When you breathe out, the valve closes and air flows around the tracheostomy tube, up through the vocal cords allowing sounds to be made. You breathe out through the mouth and nose instead of the tracheostomy.

How to use the Passy-Muir Speaking Valve

- Clean your inner cannula as needed before placing the valve. It may not be possible to use the valve if you have a lot of secretions or very thick secretions.
- Attach the valve to the top of the tracheostomy tube with a twisting motion to the right (clockwise) approximately ¼ turn. This will prevent it from popping off with coughing.
- To remove the valve, twist off to the left (counter clockwise).

Special Considerations

- Humidity can be used with the valve in place.
- Oxygen can be given with the valve in place.
- Remove the valve during aerosol treatments. If it is left on, remove it and rinse it to remove any medications that could cause the valve to stick or not work well.

Care of the Valve

- Clean the valve daily with mild soapy water.
- Rinse thoroughly with warm water. Do not use hot water as it may damage the valve.
- Let the valve air dry completely before using it again.
- Do not use a brush, vinegar, peroxide, bleach or alcohol on the valve.
- Replace the valve when it becomes sticky, noisy, or vibrates

Safety Precautions

- You should not use the valve while sleeping.
- Remove the valve immediately if you have difficulty breathing. Clean and/or change the inner cannula if needed.
- The valve must not be used on tracheostomies that have the cuff inflated.
Emergency Situations

When to call my doctor
Your tracheostomy stoma:
  • Is swollen
  • Has an increased amount of drainage
  • Has drainage with changed color
  • Drainage is foul smelling
  • Temperature of 38.5°C
  • Is more red than usual.
  • Is painful
  • Any difficulty breathing

Managing Emergencies
It is important that you know how to respond to problems that you could experience. You will need to be taught skills to deal with these situations. Try to remain calm and do as you have been taught. Remember if you need emergency assistance, dial 911.

Blocked tube
A blocked tube is usually caused by a build up of secretions. If this happens, you might notice your breathing harder and faster. You may also become anxious, sweaty or pale, grey or blue around your lips.

If this occurs change the inner cannula. If you have normal saline instillation, instill the tracheostomy and try to cough. If you continue to have difficulty breathing, go to the emergency room.

Accidental removal of tube
In the event that your whole tracheostomy appliance comes out:
  • Try not to panic
  • Replace the tube as you have been taught, even if the conditions are not ideal. When the situation has improved you can always clean it.
  • If the tube does not go back in, allow yourself to rest briefly and try again.
  • If you are still not able to replace the tube try a smaller size tube. (You should always have 2 trachs with you, the size you wear and one smaller.)
  • Call for an ambulance and come to hospital.

REMEMBER: If your tracheostomy is a few weeks old, well healed and fairly large you can breathe through the stoma itself. You have time to try again or go to the emergency room.
CPR

There are different ways to perform CPR on a person who has a tracheostomy. Some techniques are listed below. Please contact a local certified CPR trainer for proper training.

- Breathing bag to tracheostomy tube
- Mouth to tracheostomy tube
- Breathing bag and mask to face with tracheostomy stoma plugged (using a finger or tape)
- Breathing bag and mask to the tracheostomy stoma

Bibliography

(n.d.). Retrieved from www.vitalitymedical.com/Product/Passy-Muir-Pu...


General Information

Medical reason for tracheostomy tube ____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Date my tracheostomy was inserted _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Inserted by _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Family doctor _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Phone _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Ear, nose, throat _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Phone _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Pulmonologist _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Phone _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

My IPO nurse _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Phone _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Home medical supply company _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Contact person _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Phone _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Pharmacy _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Phone _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Electric company _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Phone _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Telephone company _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Phone _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Emergency Dept. _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

My trach is made by _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Size _____________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

My trach should be changed every ___ days. Due on _____________________________