

# Care of Your Tracheostomy Tube



**PATIENT  
EDUCATION**

## **Introduction**

- A tracheostomy is a surgical procedure to create an airway in your neck to help you breathe properly.
- A tracheostomy tube or “trach” (pronounced “trake”) tube creates an opening that keeps your airway clear.
- The trach tube consists of an outer tube (outer cannula), an inner tube (inner cannula) and an obturator which is only used when the entire tube is replaced. The trach tube is held in place by a soft collar.

When the trach tube is in place, you should be able to talk, eat and carry out your normal daily activities. The trach tube is usually not permanent. Your doctor will remove it when the swelling in your mouth and neck is reduced to a level that enables you to breathe safely without the trach tube. The trach tube must be kept clean to maintain a good airway and to help prevent lung (respiratory) infections. It is very important to wear the inner tube at all times and to keep it CLEAN.

## **Cleaning**

It is important to keep both the trach tube clean and the skin around where the tube is inserted clean. Use ONLY medical grade supplies for cleaning; ask your care team how to get these supplies.

You will need:

- a trach tube brush (reusable if rinsed after each use)
- 4”x4” gauze pads (split and non-split types)

## **Follow these cleaning instructions**

- Wash your hands.
- Remove the inner tube from the outer tube.
- Rinse the inner tube under running water.
- Push the trach tube brush through the inner tube several times under running water.
- Rinse the inner tube again.
- Shake out excess water.
- Re-insert the inner tube into the outer tube and click into place.
- Dampen gauze pads with running water.
- Clean the skin with damp sterile gauze pads.
- Dry the skin with sterile gauze pads.
- If necessary, slide a split, sterile gauze pad around the trach tube, leaving gauze pad in place.
- Repeat as often as necessary to keep the inner tube and site clean.

## **When to Call Your Doctor**

Call your doctor if you:

- **have a temperature of 100.4 F (38°C) or higher and/or chills**
- have pain, redness, or bleeding around the opening (stoma)
- have swelling around the trach tube
- have green, yellow, foul-smelling or bloody secretions, or thick mucus around the inner tube

## Questions or Concerns

If you have any questions or concerns during office hours, please call the Head and Neck clinic at **716-845-8186**. After hours, call **716-845-2300** and our Call Center will assist you.



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6/2024