

---

## Tracheostomy Nursing Service

# Living with a tracheostomy

Having a tracheostomy may affect your lifestyle in terms of activities and choices you previously enjoyed. However, it is possible to successfully adapt your daily living without being restricted unnecessarily by the tracheostomy. The following recommendations will provide you with practical suggestions and guidelines for adjusting to life at home with a tracheostomy.

### Daily life

You will be given a large quantity of equipment and supplies to manage your tracheostomy at home. You will need to consider where and how to store these supplies. Keep spare tracheostomy tubes in a designated place both upstairs and downstairs. Ensure everyone in the household, who is involved in the care of the tracheostomy, knows where supplies are kept.

You will need to plan and organise your day-to-day lifestyle to incorporate your health needs. It is important to be aware of any activities which may be hazardous with a tracheostomy. The following suggestions can be helpful:

- Choose clothing with loose-fitting necks and front opening to allow easy access to the tracheostomy for care or suctioning.
- Commercial coverings/scarves/neckties are available to provide some protection from foreign substances or objects (for example: sand, dust, during haircut or shaving).
- Use a water shield for protection in the shower or bath to protect against water or toiletries entering the tube.
- Avoid swimming, as there will be a very high risk of water entering your tracheostomy tube.
- Avoid contact sports, as they could result in the tracheostomy tube moving out of position or falling out.
- If you are using Buchanan bibs, they can be laundered and reused up to three times. Tie a knot in the necktie each time the bib is washed to mark a record of its use.

## Your environment

You may find that sudden changes in climate or environment (for example: cold dry atmosphere or central heating, high pollen count) can irritate the airway causing coughing or dry secretions. You may need to use a different form of humidification (for example, Swedish nose, nebulizer) to compensate for this.

The tracheostomy will bypass your normal filtering systems so you will be susceptible to common colds, viruses and influenza. These illnesses may increase the amount of mucous and secretions in your tracheostomy. Please discuss whether a flu jab will be suitable with your GP.

Try to avoid smoky or polluted environments; smoky particles cannot be filtered by the tracheostomy and can cause increased secretion production.

Avoid substances such as powders or aerosols which, if inhaled, can cause airway/chest damage or infection, (for example: furniture polish hairspray). Talcum powder, if inhaled, will form 'clumps' within the airway.

Avoid contact with animals that have fine hair. Their hair can easily be inhaled via the stoma.

Let the local Electricity Board know of your health needs, as they will be able to let you know in advance of planned power cuts and place your home on an 'at risk' list to ensure priority electricity supply/reconnection.

## What equipment do you need when you are away from home?

Always carry supplies required to change your tracheostomy tube. A small case or bag containing essential equipment will avoid any delay in the event of an emergency tube change.

The following items should be contained within the bag:

- One tracheostomy tube (of current size)
- One tracheostomy tube (one size smaller) for use in the event of being unable to insert tube
- Velcro collar or cotton tapes
- Scissors (if using cotton tapes)
- Pre-cut dressing
- Syringe (if tube is cuffed)
- Lubricating jelly
- Emergency contact details, for example GP, District Nurse, local hospital, ENT Ward, Tracheostomy Nurse (if available)

A fully charged portable suction unit with tubing and suction catheters should be accessible at all times.

## For further information or advice please contact:

- Claudia Russell  
Nurse Consultant in Tracheostomy Management
- Claire Scase  
Tracheostomy Support Nurse
- Monday-Friday (0900-1500 hours)
- 01223 217425 (24 hour message service) or 01223 245151 bleep 152/459 (not for emergency use).
- In case of emergency, please dial 999.

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format: 01223 216032 or [patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)

Potete chiedere di ottenere queste informazioni in altre lingue, in stampato grande o in audiocassetta.

### Italian

若你需要本信息的繁體中文、大字體或音訊格式的版本，請要求索取。

### Cantonese

तमने आ माहिती बीछ भाषाओमां, मोटा अक्षरोमां अथवा सांभजी शकाय जेवा माध्यम (ओडीओ इमेज)मां जेठती छोय तो कृपा करीने पूछो.

### Gujarati

تکایہ پرسیار بکے نہ گہر نہ وزانیاریہت دہوی بہ زمانیکی تر , بہ پیتی گہورہ یانیش بہ شیوہی دہنگ

### Kurdish

آگر آپ کو یہ معلومات دوسری زبانوں میں، بڑے الفاظ کی اشاعت میں یا آڈیو ٹیپ پروکاروں تو برائے مہربانی اس کیلئے درخواست کریں۔

### Urdu



Addenbrooke's is smoke-free. Please do not smoke anywhere on the site.

For advice on quitting, contact your GP or the NHS smoking helpline free, 0800 169 0 169

### Document history

Authors	Claire Scase, Tracheostomy Support Nurse
Department	Box 253 Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 2QQ <a href="http://www.addenbrookes.org.uk">www.addenbrookes.org.uk</a>
Contact number	01223 217425
Published	February 2007
Review date	February 2009
File name	Living_with_tracheostomy.doc
Version number	1
Ref	PIN 1550