Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Caring for Your Laryngectomy Stoma

This information explains how to suction your laryngectomy stoma and clean your laryngectomy tube.

It's important to keep your airway open so you can breathe. Suctioning your stoma will keep it free of secretions and allow air in and out of your lungs. Your nurse will teach you how to suction your stoma and how often to do this.

How to suction your laryngectomy stoma

1. Gather your supplies. You'll need:
   - A suction machine with plastic tubing
   - A suction catheter
   - A bowl or large cup filled with water
   - A mirror
   - A clean, dry cloth or paper towel (when you're at home)
   - Clean, dry gauze pads (when you're in the hospital)
2. Wash your hands well with soap and water.
3. Connect the suction catheter to the suction machine's plastic tubing.
4. Place the mirror so you can see your laryngectomy stoma opening.
5. Turn on the suction machine. (If you're in the hospital, open the clamp on the suction tubing instead). Pinch the catheter between your thumb and pointer finger to block the suction.
6. Cough deeply to bring up any secretions.

7. Keep the suction catheter pinched. Put it about 3 to 5 inches (8 to 13 centimeters) into your stoma (see Figure 1).

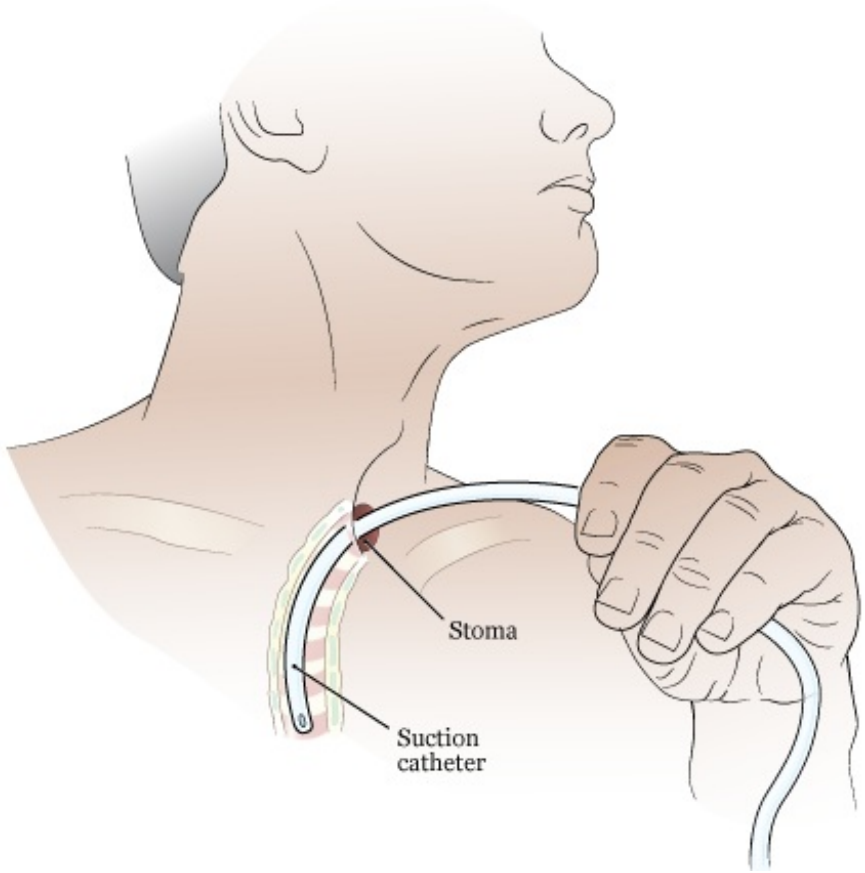


Figure 1. Suctioning your stoma

8. Un-pinch the catheter to start suctioning. Suction for 5 to 10 seconds or as long as directed by your healthcare provider. Don't keep the catheter in your trachea for longer than 10 seconds. Keeping it in too long can cause shortness of breath.
9. Using a rotating motion, slowly pull the suction catheter out of your stoma. Rotating the catheter helps it suck up secretions on all sides of your trachea and stoma.
10. Wipe the secretions from the outside of the suction catheter with a clean, dry cloth or paper towel. (If you're in the hospital, use dry gauze instead).
11. Rinse the secretions from the inside of the suction catheter by suctioning water through it.
12. Repeat these steps if you feel you have more secretions that need to be

cleared out. If you need to repeat the suctioning more than 2 or 3 times, rest for a few minutes before starting again.

Once you're done:

1. Make sure the suction catheter and plastic tube are clean. Rinse and wipe the outside and suction water through the inside to clean them, if needed.
2. Disconnect the suction catheter from the plastic tubing on the suction machine.
3. Place the suction catheter on the dry cloth or paper towel.
4. If you're at home, empty the secretions from the inside of the suction machine into the toilet. Don't empty them into the sink. They can clog the drain. In the hospital, a staff member will do this for you.

While you're at home, change the suction catheter every week or more often if it's dirty or clogged. While you're in the hospital, you'll use a new catheter each time you suction.

How to remove, clean, and reinsert your laryngectomy tube

Clean your laryngectomy tube regularly to help to keep it free of secretions. We recommend cleaning it at least twice a day or more often as needed. Your nurse or speech pathologist will show you how.

1. Gather your supplies. You'll need:
    - A mirror
    - A nylon tracheostomy brush or laryngectomy tube brush
    - Cotton neck ribbon or tube holder
    - Scissors
    - Normal saline
    - Cotton-tipped applicators
    - Surgilube® (optional)

- A clean, dry cloth or paper towel (when you're at home)
- Clean, dry gauze pads (when you're in the hospital)

2. Wash your hands well with soap and water.
3. Stand or sit in front of a sink with a mirror.
4. Untie or cut your neck ribbon, or undo your tube holder.
5. Remove the tube from your stoma.
6. Use the nylon brush to clean the inside of the laryngectomy tube (see Figure 2). Then hold the tube under warm running water.

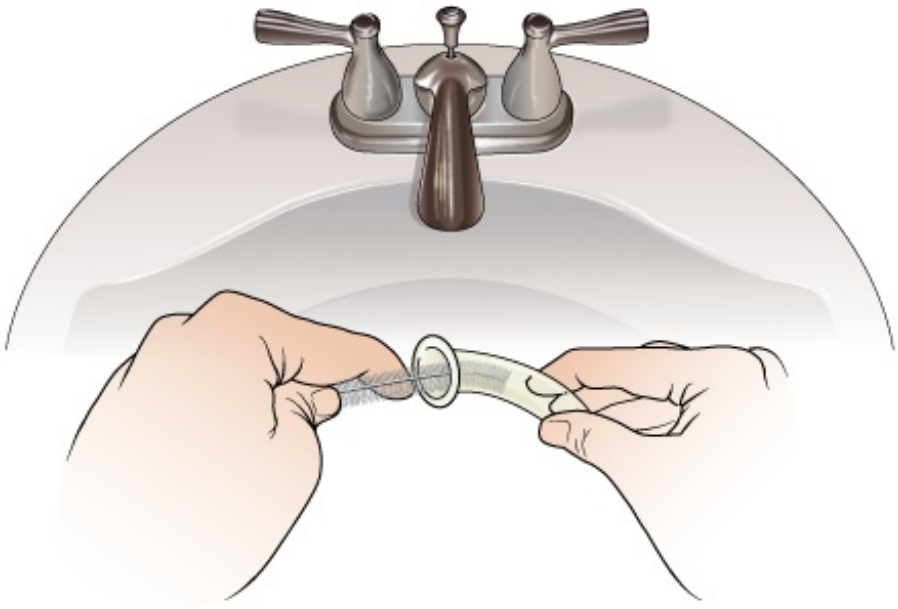


Figure 2. Cleaning your laryngectomy tube

7. Once the tube is clean, shake out the extra water. Dry the tube with a clean, dry cloth or paper towel. (If you're in the hospital, use gauze instead.)
8. Put clean neck ribbon or a clean tube holder in the slots on the side of the tube.
9. Gently clean the skin around your stoma with normal saline using cotton-tipped applicators.
10. Lubricate the outside of the tube with water or Surgilube.
11. Tilt your chin slightly toward your chest.

12. Hold your breath and put the tube into your stoma (see Figure 3).

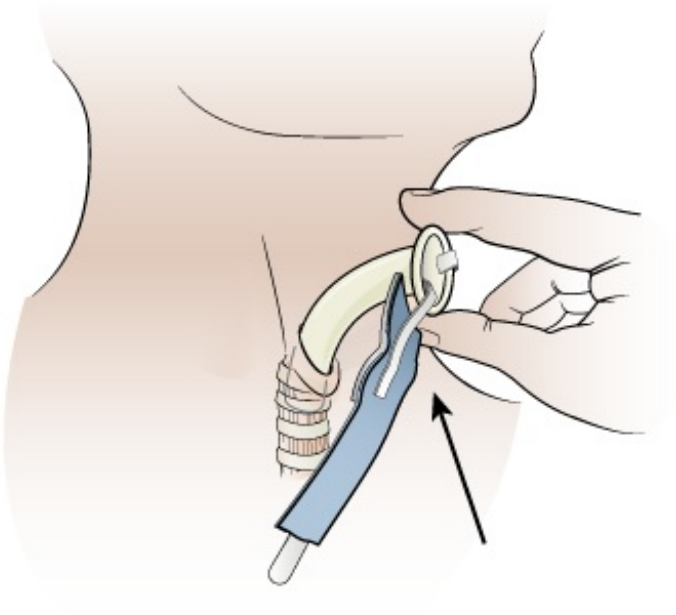


Figure 3. Inserting your laryngectomy tube

13. Tie the neck tape leaving 1 finger space between the tape and your neck.
14. Rinse the nylon tracheostomy brush under running water.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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