

Tracheostomy — Patient Resource Guide

Care instructions, equipment basics, and troubleshooting for home tracheostomy care.

Care Instructions

Daily

- Clean around the stoma with saline or as directed, checking for redness, swelling, or drainage.
- Change trach ties/holder if soiled or loose — fit should allow one finger between tie and neck.
- Suction as needed per your prescribed schedule, using clean technique each time.

Inner Cannula (if applicable)

- Clean or replace per your care plan — typically once or twice daily, or per your specific tube's clinical guidance.

Weekly / Scheduled

- Full tube change per your physician's schedule — never delay a scheduled change without medical guidance.
- Clean humidification equipment (HME or trach collar tubing) per device instructions.

Supplies

- Always keep a spare trach tube of the same size, plus one size smaller, at the bedside and when traveling.
- Keep suction catheters, saline, and a resuscitation bag within reach at all times.

Equipment & Usage Basics

- **Suctioning technique:** Use clean technique, insert only to the pre-measured depth, suction only while withdrawing, no more than 10–15 seconds per pass.
- **Humidification:** Trach airways bypass the nose's natural humidifying function — supplemental humidity is essential to prevent mucus plugging.
- **Tube changes:** Know the step-by-step for your specific tube, including how to reinsert if it comes out unexpectedly — practice this with your home care nurse before an emergency.

Troubleshooting

Issue	What to check	When to call us
Difficulty/noisy breathing	Suction for secretions, check tube isn't blocked or dislodged	If breathing doesn't improve immediately — call 911, then us
Tube dislodged or falls out	Attempt reinsertion only if trained to do so	Call 911 immediately if you cannot reinsert and patient is struggling to breathe

Issue	What to check	When to call us
Bleeding/unusual drainage	Note color/amount, gently clean site	Call us same-day; call 911 if bleeding is heavy
Mucus plug / thick secretions	Increase humidification, suction	If suctioning doesn't clear the airway, treat as urgent
Skin irritation at stoma	Keep area clean and dry, check tie tightness	If redness worsens, odor develops, or fever appears

Safety reminder: A tracheostomy is a direct airway — any breathing difficulty is urgent. Always have suction equipment and a spare tube within reach. If the patient cannot breathe and you cannot clear the airway, call 911 immediately, then our 24/7 RRT line.

For any equipment issue you can't resolve, or any symptom that concerns you, our Respiratory and Clinical team is available 24/7 at (718) 854-5501. Don't wait for a problem to get worse — call us first.