

Module 13: Life with a Trach

Disclaimer

This material is intended for use by trained family members and caregivers of children with tracheostomies who are patients at the Alberta Children's Hospital. Although reasonable efforts were made to confirm the accuracy of the information, Alberta Health Services does not make any representation or warranty, express, implied or statutory, as to the accuracy, reliability, completeness, applicability or fitness for a particular purpose of such information. This material is not a substitute for the advice of a qualified health professional, so please seek medical advice from an appropriate health professional for questions regarding the care and treatment of any patient. Alberta Health Services expressly disclaims all liability for the use of these materials, and for any claims, actions, demands or suits arising from such use.

Your Child's Trach

- A basic review about life with a trach
- Having a child with a trach in the community has an associated level of risk where there is a potential for harm, injury, or death because of the trach

Life with a Trach Tube

- A child with a trach needs to be able to live like a typical child – to develop, grow, learn, and play as naturally as possible
- Activities for your child may require more planning and preparation because of their trach tube or equipment
 - Activities may have to be modified to prevent any tubing or connectors from getting pulled or putting pressure on any area of your child's skin
 - Activities may need to be avoided to prevent foreign objects from getting in the airway

Bathing and Water

You will need to be careful about the hazards associated with water, bathing, and swimming:

- Swimming and water sports must be avoided
- Use shallow water when bathing, and never leave your child alone in the tub
- When bathing your child, be careful when washing their hair and upper body - try not to pour water over the trach
- You may want to have an HME or trach collar covering the trach while bathing
- Showering may be appropriate for the older child if they can protect their trach tube from the water flow – keep water flow below the trach

Weather and Triggers

You need to be aware of the hazards associated with exposure to harsh weather, foreign particles, and outdoor triggers:

- Try to avoid dust, smoke, allergens if applicable, and strong fumes/odours (perfumes, deodorizers, vape cigarettes, household cleaners)
- Be cautious with animal hair or dander
- Avoid exposure to cold temperatures, windy, dry, or dusty conditions

Eating and Drinking

You will need to be cautious about the hazards associated with eating and drinking:

- Your child may have a diagnosis that means they may not be able to eat normally or may be tube fed
- Regardless of how your child is fed, caution should be taken to decrease the risk of food/fluid going into the lungs (aspiration)
- Follow any nutritional practices that you have been taught
- Your child should be supervised during all meals and feeds
- The use of an HME or tracheostomy mask to cover the tracheostomy tube may help prevent some foods/fluids from entering the lungs
- If vomiting does occur, suction immediately

Clothing

You must be careful about the hazards of some types of clothing:

- Avoid clothing that can obstruct the trach like turtle necks or scarves
- Use tops that are open around the neck or button up in front to give room for the trach tube
- Avoid clothes that are fuzzy or shed fibers or lint
- Make sure that hats and bibs do not occlude the tracheostomy tube or interfere with the tracheostomy ties
- Never use a plastic bib that can cover and obstruct the trach

Play

You will need to be cautious of the hazards that are associated with play:

- Your child can enjoy any play activity that they can physically participate in, but they must be supervised
- Avoid toys that shed fur, fuzz, dust, chalk
- Avoid toys that are small or have small parts that can obstruct the trach
- Avoid swimming activities
- Avoid play that can produce particles which could be inhaled into the trach (playing in a sand box or at the beach)
- Playing sports should be discussed with your child's physician

Infections

Practicing caution with your child and their trach means being aware of the hazards of being exposed to infections:

- Avoid infectious people or people who are experiencing cold and flu symptoms
- Good hand washing is extremely important in the prevention and spread of disease
- Ensure immunizations and vaccinations are up to date

Life with a Trach Tube in the Community

You must be careful about the hazards that are associated with living in the community:

- Having a child with a trach in the community has an associated level of risk where there is a potential for harm, injury, or death because of the trach
- Learning how to anticipate, plan, and prepare for such events and how to deal with them will help decrease the chances of an emergency occurring and the impacts of an emergency should one occur