

# Suctioning Your Child's Trach: Simple Suction Catheter



Suction machine



Suction catheter



Resuscitator bag



Saline packets



Gloves and  
hand sanitizer

## Why do we suction?

Mucus (secretions) builds up inside every tracheostomy tube. The purpose of suctioning is to keep the airway open so your child can breathe. You will need to remove the mucus your child is unable to clear by their own effort. The mucus must be coughed out or suctioned clear.

## How often do we suction?

Since the amount of secretions varies from person to person, how often you suction will vary. To keep the airway clear, your child's doctor has prescribed suctioning:

- Every 6 hours and as needed due to mucus
- When your child wakes in the morning and just before bed at night
- Every time you change the trach ties or the tube itself

## Signs that your child needs to be suctioned

There are several ways your child will show they need suctioning. These include:

- Increased work of breathing:
  - Retractions: the skin around the bones in chest pulls in at each breath (in the neck, below the trach, above the collar bones, under breast bone, between and under the ribs)
  - Flaring of the nostrils
  - Rapid or hard breathing
- Increased mucus in the chest:
  - Coughing, noisy or gurgling sounds when breathing
  - Rumbling or rattling felt in child's chest by caregiver's hand placement
- Fussy, distressed look, sweaty – clammy skin
- Pale or blue color or a drop in oxygen level (O<sub>2</sub> sats)

## Supplies for suctioning

(See photos at left.)

- Suction machine and connective tubing
- Simple suction catheter of appropriate size
- Resuscitator bag connected to oxygen, for use if needed
- Normal saline packets
- Gloves and hand sanitizer

1 of 3

## To Learn More

- Respiratory Care  
206-987-2258
- Ask your child's  
healthcare provider
- [seattlechildrens.org](http://seattlechildrens.org)

## Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free  
Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527.  
Tell the interpreter the name or extension  
you need.

## Suctioning steps



**1** Wash hands or use hand sanitizer.



**2** Put gloves on.



**3** Turn on suction machine and check suction pressure.



**4** Give blow-by O<sub>2</sub> with resuscitator bag.



**5** Open suction catheter package. Connect catheter to suction connective tubing, being careful not to touch the tip of the catheter.



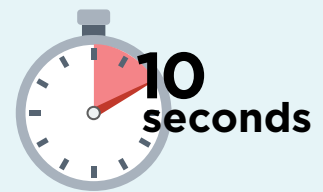
**6** Pinch forefinger and thumb at predetermined suction depth. You want the tip of the catheter to pass just beyond the end of the tracheostomy tube.



**7** Carefully but quickly insert the catheter directly into the tracheostomy tube opening to the predetermined suction depth.



**8** As you withdraw the catheter, cover the port with your thumb to create suction.



**Limit suctioning time to less than 10 seconds in the tube at a time.**

## If secretions are thick and hard to suction



**1** Put a few drops of normal saline into the trach tube to help thin secretions.



**2** Give blow-by O<sub>2</sub> with the resuscitator bag to allow your child time to catch their breath between passes of the catheter.



**3** Repeat suction steps and blow-by O<sub>2</sub> as needed, using saline only if secretions remain thick and hard to suction through the catheter.

## Finishing steps



**1** At the end of suctioning, give blow-by O<sub>2</sub> with resuscitator bag after removing the catheter.



**2** Rinse suction tubing.



**3** Discard catheter and saline packets.