

# How to Suction Your Tracheostomy

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Suctioning removes mucous and secretions from your tracheostomy tube (trach tube) and keeps your airway open. You may need to suction when mucous and secretions are thick and too hard for you to cough out. You may need to clean and re-use your suction catheter each day, unless you were given other instructions.

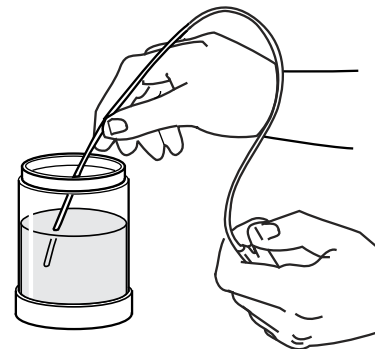
**General tracheostomy care should be done 2 times a day, even if you do not need to suction.**

## Supplies

- Suction machine
- Suction catheter kit
- Small bowl (if suction catheter kit is plastic, you may use it as a bowl)
- Distilled water (or normal saline)

## Steps to Follow

1. Organize your supplies.
2. Wash your hands with soap and warm water.
3. Pour distilled water into the small bowl.
4. Connect the suction catheter to the tubing on the suction machine.
5. Turn on the suction machine to 100 to 120mmHg. To check the suction, dip the end of the catheter into the bowl of distilled water. Cover the thumb hole on the catheter to apply suction and then release.



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**This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.**

6. Insert the catheter into your trach tube.

**Do not cover the thumb hole.** Guide the catheter to the end of the tube, about 3 to 3 ½ inches or when you start to cough. **Do not force the catheter if you feel a large amount of pressure.**

7. When your catheter is in place, cover the thumb hole and start to suction.

8. As you slowly pull the catheter out, roll the catheter between your thumb and forefinger and move your thumb on and off the thumb hole. This is called intermittent suction. **Do not cover the thumb hole the entire time you are pulling out the catheter.**



9. **Do not suction for longer than 10 to 15 seconds.**

10. Take time to rest and catch your breath for 30 to 60 seconds in between each time you suction. Suction until your airway is clear.

11. After you suction, dip the catheter tip into the bowl of distilled water and use suction to clear the catheter and tubing.

12. If needed, repeat steps 6 through 11. You can suction yourself up to 2 times in 1 session.

13. After you suction, it is important to clean and dry your catheter. For more information, ask for the patient education handout, [How to Clean Your Tracheostomy or Laryngectomy Suction Catheter.](#)

**Look at the amount, color and thickness of the secretions. Call your doctor if you see any of the following:**

- Bright red blood
- Yellow, brown or green drainage
- Drainage that smells bad
- Secretions are thicker than usual
- Increase in the amount of secretions