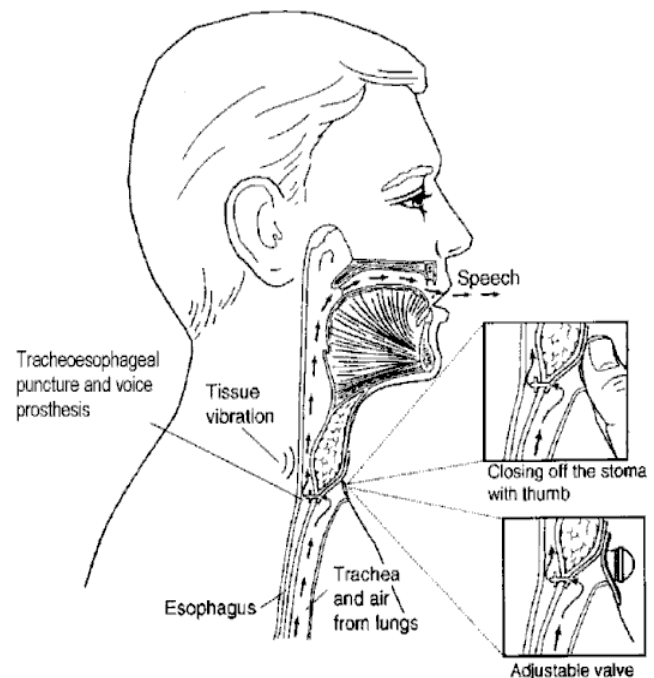


# Tracheoesophageal Speech with Voice Prosthesis

**Tracheoesophageal (TRAY - kee - oh - es - OF - a - JEE - al)** speech is a way of talking after a total laryngectomy and a tracheoesophageal puncture (TEP). A TEP is a surgery done to make a small hole in the wall between your trachea (windpipe) and your esophagus (food pipe).

A small plastic tube, called a **“voice prosthesis”** is put into the hole to keep it open. The voice prosthesis has a one-way valve that lets air pass from your lungs through the hole and into your esophagus. The top area of your esophagus will vibrate and make sound. Your tongue, lips and teeth help form words as air passes through your mouth.



A voice prosthesis must be fitted for you. A speech therapist will teach you how to use and care for your voice prosthesis.

## Care of Your Voice Prosthesis

Size: \_\_\_\_\_ Type: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## How do I clean my voice prosthesis?

- Use a cleaning brush and flushing tool to clean your voice prosthesis. Clean it in the morning and in the evening.
- You should replace your cleaning brush every 30 days. Your speech therapist will tell you where and how you can order new supplies.

## How do I check for a leak?

If you cough when you drink liquids, you need to check for a leak.

- Pour a small glass of a dark colored drink, such as concord grape juice, purple Kool Aid, or coffee.
- Stand in front of a mirror, take a small sip and swallow the liquid. Look to see if the dark colored liquid leaks **through** or **around** your prosthesis.
- If you have a leak **through** the prosthesis, clean it with a brush and flushing device. If it continues to leak, you **MUST** put in your prosthesis plug or thicken your liquids. Make an appointment with your speech therapist for the prosthesis to be changed. Your speech therapist will give you information about liquid thickener or how to order a plug.
- If there is leakage **around** your prosthesis, call for an appointment to get it changed right away.

## What should I do if my Voice Prosthesis comes out?

- **If the prosthesis comes out, put your red rubber catheter into the hole where the prosthesis normally sits. Do this right away to keep the hole from closing.**
- If you are unable to put in the red rubber catheter, **go to the closest emergency room.** Take your red rubber catheter with you, so they can put it in for you. If you do not have your red rubber catheter with you, one will be provided.
- You may have a chest x-ray done in the emergency room to make sure your voice prosthesis has not moved into your lung.
- After you leave the emergency room, call to make an appointment right away with your ENT doctor and speech therapist.

## What else do I need to know about my voice prosthesis?

Your health care team will share information with you about how the following may affect your voice prosthesis:

- **Yeast**
  - ▶ Your doctor may order a liquid medicine to help with yeast. Swish the medicine all around your mouth for 5 full minutes. Your doctor will tell you how many times a day this should be done.
  - ▶ Use this medicine right before bed, after eating food and drinks and after brushing your teeth.
  - ▶ To help reduce yeast, do not eat foods that are high in sugar and brush your teeth or gums and tongue 2 times a day.
- **Heartburn**
  - ▶ Your doctor may order medicine to help with heartburn which may get worse after surgery.
  - ▶ It is important to take your medicine at the same time every day.
  - ▶ Tell your doctor if you continue to have problems with heartburn even after taking the medicine.
- **Stoma Vent**
  - ▶ It is important to wear your stoma vent. This is the clear plastic tube that you wear in your stoma.
  - ▶ This vent helps keep your airway open for breathing and when your voice prosthesis is cleaned or changed.
  - ▶ If you find it hard to put in your stoma vent, you need to wear it more often to keep the stoma from getting smaller.

## Where can I get my supplies?

Your speech therapist will give you information about where you can get your voice prosthesis supplies.