

Laryngectomy Definitions

Artificial airway

A surgically created opening in the *trachea* that bypasses the normal upper airway system (nose and mouth). Also called "*tracheostomy*" or "*tracheostoma*".

Aspiration

When food, saliva, or other substances enter the trachea instead of the *esophagus*. Can cause coughing and discomfort.

Atmospheric

Of or relating to air (atmosphere).

Bacterial

Of, relating to, or caused by bacteria.

Candida

A yeast-like fungus that can attack an indwelling device such as a voice prosthesis or tracheostomy tube. This fungus can eventually alter or destroy the surfaces of the devices, making them not work properly.

Cartilage

Firm, rubbery connective tissue that cushions bones at joints.

Diaphragm

Muscle in chest used for breathing; separates the abdomen from the chest cavity.

Electrolarynx

An electronic device used to produce a mechanical voice. Placed in the corner of the mouth or against the skin of the neck.

Encrustation

Hard and dried build-up of *mucus*. Must be removed from *tracheostomy* or *laryngectomy tube* to ensure maximum airflow.

Epiglottis

"Trap door". A structure made of cartilage that overhangs the *larynx* like a lid and prevents food, saliva, and liquids from entering the *larynx* and *trachea* while swallowing.

Esophageal Speech

The technique of swallowing air and belching to create speech.

Esophagus

"Food pipe". The food and fluid passageway from the mouth to the stomach. Located behind the *trachea*.

Expiration

Breathing out of air from lungs.

Fistula

An opening (either planned or abnormal) between two structures such as the trachea and esophagus.

Granulation tissue

Tissue that can grow in or around the *trachea*. Can block lower part of *tracheostomy tube* or creep into *tracheostomy tube fenestrations*. Can usually be treated with medication or removed by doctor.

HME device

Heat / Moisture Exchanger. A filter-like device that, when attached to the outside of a *tracheostoma*, will trap heated and moisturized air from the lungs during *expiration*. The heated and moisturized air is then re-delivered to the lungs during *inspiration*.

Inspiration

Breathing in of air to lungs.

Insufflation test

A test given to a laryngectomee before receiving a *tracheoesophageal puncture* procedure to determine his/her potential ability to speak using a *voice prosthesis*.

Laryngectomee

A person who has had his or her *larynx* removed.

Laryngectomy

Partial or total surgical removal of the larynx, usually as a treatment for laryngeal cancer.

Laryngectomy Tube

A tubular device placed in the *tracheostoma* to provide support.

Laryngoscope

A flexible lighted tube used to examine the *larynx*.

Laryngoscopy

Examination of the *larynx* with a mirror (indirect laryngoscopy) or with a *laryngoscope* (direct laryngoscopy).

Larynx

"Voicebox" or "Adams apple". Located on top of the *trachea*. Contains the *epiglottis* and *vocal cords*.

Lot number

Unique number assigned by the manufacturer that identifies your *voice prosthesis* and *tracheostomy tube*.

Low profile

Used to describe the outside end of a *tracheostomy tube* or *speaking valve* that is short and close to the neck.

Lumen

The inside of the *tracheostomy tube* through which air passes.

mm

The abbreviation for millimeter. One millimeter equals .039 inches.

Mucus

A thick, sticky fluid made by the mucus membranes and glands of the airway walls. A large buildup of mucous below or in the *tracheostomy tube* can create a "mucus plug" and can partially or completely block the passage of air through the tube.

Neck dissection

Surgery to remove cancerous lymph nodes in the neck.

Neck plate

The outer part of the *tracheostomy tube* that rests against the neck. Most neck plates have slots through which *trach ties* or *neck straps* can be attached. Usually the catalog number and size of the *tracheostomy tube* is marked on the neck plate.

Neck straps

Soft fabric strap attached to *tracheostomy tube neck plate* to help keep tube in place. Some neck straps are adjustable.

Obturator

A device that fits inside the *tracheostomy tube* prior to insertion into the *tracheostoma*. When inserted into the tube, the obturator creates a blunt point at the bottom of the tube to make tube insertion easier and more comfortable. The obturator is immediately removed following tube insertion.

Outer cannula

The main tube with neck plate that is placed into the *trachea*.

Patent, Patency

Open, clear airway

Speaking valve

A one-way valve device that permits speaking without the need for the patient to cover the *tracheostomy tube* with his/her finger. The valve will open during *inspiration* to allow air to be inhaled, and close during *expiration* to direct air up through larynx and mouth.

Stoma

A hole through the front of the neck into the *trachea*.

Suctioning

One method to keep the inside of the *tracheostomy tube* clean and free of mucus. A small catheter connected to a suction machine is placed into the *tracheostomy tube* to remove accumulated *mucous* and other substances.

Swivel neck plate

A neck plate that can swivel up and down and/or side to side. Allows for greater range of head and neck movement without discomfort caused by tracheostomy tube pressing against the inside of the trachea.

Trach

Shortened version of *tracheostomy*. Rhymes with "lake".

Trachea

"Windpipe". The passageway through which air flows between the *larynx* and the lungs.

Tracheal wall

The inside lining of the *trachea*.

Tracheoesophageal Puncture (TEP)

A surgically created opening between the *trachea* and *esophagus* performed either during the *laryngectomy* procedure or later as a secondary operation. A *voice prosthesis* is placed in the opening to allow speech.

Tracheostoma

An opening in the neck. Also called "tracheal stoma" or simply "stoma".

Tracheostomy Tube

A tubular device placed into the *tracheostoma*. Also called a *laryngectomy tube*.

Tracheostomy

A surgically created opening through the neck into the *trachea*.

Tracheotomy

The surgical procedure to create a *tracheostomy*.

Trach ties

Fabric, usually cotton twill, used to secure the *tracheostomy tube* in place. Connects to the slots in the *tracheostomy tube neck plate*.

Voice prosthesis

A small tubular device placed in the *tracheoesophageal puncture*. The device will have some sort of one-way valve to allow expired air from the lungs to pass up through to the *esophagus*, and will close to prevent food and liquids from entering the *trachea* from the *esophagus*. The device enables laryngectomees to produce speech by creating an airflow to the esophagus, vibrating the esophagus to create sound, and allowing the tongue, teeth, and lips to form speech.