

# How to look after your stoma

Speech and Language Therapy

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Information for Patients

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## Introduction

This booklet gives you information about your stoma and how to look after it.

You should clean your stoma at least twice a day, once in the morning and once at night. You will be advised by your speech and language therapist (SLT) or clinical nurse specialist (CNS) if you need to clean your stoma more often than this. As well as the information contained in this booklet, you can also watch videos about how to look after your stoma by following this link:

[www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk/aboutus/departments-services/speech-and-language/head-and-neck-speech-therapy](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk/aboutus/departments-services/speech-and-language/head-and-neck-speech-therapy)

## How to clean your stoma

What you will need:

- nebuliser
- gauze
- water (can be warm)
- good light source
- mirror
- the heat moisture exchanger (HME) that you use (see page 3 for details)
- plastic tweezers
- skin preparation (if applicable)
- adhesive removers (if applicable)
- trachie swabs (as advised)

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## Before you start

1. Remove any coverings, for example base plate, tubes and any visible adhesive debris with adhesive removers if required.
2. Nebulise your stoma.
3. Set up your light source and mirror so you can see your stoma clearly.

## Cleaning

**Cleaning of your stoma should be done thoroughly and may take five to ten minutes**

1. Dip the gauze into the water and squeeze any excess out.
2. Wrap the gauze around your index finger and hold in place.
3. Clean around your stoma.
4. Discard dirty gauze and repeat steps 1-3 with a new piece of gauze. Once all debris has been removed the stoma should be sufficiently clean.

If there are any stubborn crusty areas, then spend some time gently cleaning them. This will help to soak the crust and make the debris easier to remove. **Do not clean inside the stoma.**

**Do not** pull hard at crusty areas that are not ready to come off. Repeated nebulising should help soften these areas to allow the crust to be wiped away with gauze.

**Tweezers should only be used if you can see a plug of mucus which is blocking the stoma and making breathing difficult.**

5. Once clean, allow the stoma to air dry.
6. If advised, use skin preparation around the stoma once the surface is completely dry.
7. Replace tubes, bibs, base plates and HME as appropriate.

## Humidification of your stoma: Heat Moisture Exchange (HME)

Before your operation the air that reached your lungs passed through your nose and mouth where it was moistened, filtered and warmed.

After your operation the air that enters your stoma is dry and dusty. It is therefore essential that you humidify (moisten) the air that you breathe in to prevent your chest secretions (phlegm) becoming dry, thick and infected.

To do this you must use a heat moisture exchange (HME) option over your stoma that warms, humidifies and cleans the air going into your stoma.

It is best to use baseplates or LaryTubes with HME cassettes. The protection from the HME cassette allows the tiny hairs (cilia) inside your lungs and airways to continue their job of moving secretions away from your lungs. This will help your lungs to work better and protect you from chest infections and viruses.

We advise you to start using this system as soon after your operation as possible. There are other options available but they do not provide the same protection.

Follow the link below to watch a video about the benefits of using an HME:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-tETbEKNZ4>

## Important information

### Bathing

Some people worry about bathing after laryngectomy. There is no reason why you cannot have a bath or shower, but you must be careful that no water enters your stoma. Shower shields are available from the suppliers below.

### Swimming

Do not go swimming unless you are attending a laryngectomy swimming club with appropriate equipment and staffing.

### General advice

- Be careful not to spray aerosols close to your stoma as this may irritate your airway.
- During hot weather ensure that you protect your stoma from the sun.
- Do not use cotton wool, cotton buds or tissues, as small fibres may be inhaled causing irritation in the airway which is often difficult to relieve.
- Your sense of smell may now be reduced and you may struggle to taste food. You may be able to have some sense of smell by learning the 'polite yawning technique', where you yawn with closed lips. This draws air in through the nose, allowing you to smell. It can also improve your sense of taste.

**Emergency advice**

If you are having difficulty breathing please contact 999 and ensure paramedics place the oxygen mask over your stoma **not** your mouth. You may also choose to wear a medical emergency bracelet to inform others that you breathe through your stoma.

There is also a telephone text service. For information visit [www.emergencysms.org.uk](http://www.emergencysms.org.uk)

Please ask your speech and language therapist if you have any questions about the information above.

**Suppliers of tracheostomy equipment****Fittleworth**

Telephone: 0800 378 846

Email: [caring@fittleworth.com](mailto:caring@fittleworth.com)

[www.fittleworth.com](http://www.fittleworth.com)

**Countrywide supplies**

Telephone: 0800 783 1659

Text: 07800 140 059

Email: [info@countrywidesupplies.co.uk](mailto:info@countrywidesupplies.co.uk)

[www.countrywidesupplies.co.uk](http://www.countrywidesupplies.co.uk)

**Patient Choice**

Telephone: 0800 862 0686

Email: [admin@patientchoice.net](mailto:admin@patientchoice.net)

[www.patientchoice.net](http://www.patientchoice.net)

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਸਿ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

Previous reference:

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email [equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)