



THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
LARYNGECTOMEE CLUBS

A Guide for the  
laryngectomee and family

# Laryngectomy Stoma Care

## Introduction

After laryngectomy (i.e. removal of the voice box) the top of the trachea, or windpipe, is sewn to an opening in the neck. The opening or hole is called a STOMA. It is a permanent opening and will NOT close over, occasionally it shrinks in size. It is vital that you monitor the size so that it doesn't get too small. You breathe through the stoma. At first you will have a lot of mucus from your stoma until it settles down after the operation. If you have any radiotherapy treatment, it can make the mucus much worse for a few weeks. This will settle down after a few months.

It is vital that you keep the stoma clear and free from crusts.

Anything that touches the area should be clean - including your fingers!

## Cleaning the Stoma

This should be done at least once a day; but at first it may be necessary to do this more frequently.

### Requirements

It is important to have good light and a clean mirror in order to see clearly when cleaning the stoma, as well as clean hands.

### Cleaning Solutions

Freshly boiled and cooled water

**OR**

Saline solution - i.e. one tsp. salt to a mug of freshly boiled and cooled water

**OR**

Sodium Bicarbonate - one tsp. sodium bicarbonate to a mug of water.

Other solutions from your local Head & Neck Department.

Any of the above may be used to clean the stoma.

Do not use sharp instruments or probe down the stoma too deeply. Cotton wool buds with any of the above cleaning solutions are perfectly adequate.

## Humidification

If the stoma tube is kept moist, it is easier to keep free of crusts and to remove those which might form.

Plastic spray bottles can be used to moisten the stoma.

### Excessive Crusting

The following tips may help:

Fill a sink or large bowl with boiling water and then lean forward and inhale the steam

**OR**

A soak in a steamy bath may be beneficial; care must be taken that water does not reach the stoma

**OR**

You may need to remove hard crusts with a pair of forceps after radiotherapy - your nurse or doctor will show you how to do this.

A nebuliser machine can be obtained from the hospital or the district nurse - this produces a fine mist for you to breathe in.

Humidifiers can be purchased. Ask for advice from the Head & Neck Department.

# Airway Protection

## Trachi-Naze

This system has been designed to replace all the functions of the nasal airway. It provides Heat, Moisture to the trachea, as well as filtering the air from dust and bacteria. It helps to reduce mucus and the problems associated with dry unfiltered air. It also increases oxygenation during breathing – allowing the wearer to feel fitter and sleep better. It is able to do this by providing the necessary internal airway pressures for efficient respiration. It can be worn with a voice prosthesis and is held on the neck by a baseplate. Available on prescription.

## PROVOX Stomafilter

The PROVOX Stomafilter Heat and Moisture Exchanger (HME), which is held on the neck by a baseplate, is intended to facilitate quality of breathing and speech with easy application by persons who have undergone a total laryngectomy. The PROVOX Stomafilter is suitable for those with or without a voice prosthesis. Available on prescription.

## Blom-Singer HumidiFilter System

Allows a laryngectomee to recover advantages previously provided by breathing through the nose. By using the HumidiFilter System, a large percentage of the moisture in each breath, along with its retained heat, is conserved and returned to the bronchi and lungs, helping to reduce coughing, dryness, and mucus secretions. All patients, regardless of method of voice restoration, may use the Blom-Singer HumidiFilter System.

## Stoma Tubes

The trend nowadays is to do without a stoma tube.

However, if one is used it is important that the tube is kept clean and changed according to the hospital's instructions. Often the tracheostomy tube is only used for the first few months until the stoma is well-formed and you are confident in stoma management. However, if the stoma tends to shrink, your doctor may recommend that the tube stays in place.

## Types of Tube

**Plastic tube** - Shiley tubes and Tracoe-Twist

**Silver tube** - Chevalier Jackson

**Stoma Stud** - Kapitex.

These tubes are held in position with linen tape. You can also get Velcro tracheostomy holders from Kapitex which are easier to secure if you find tapes difficult. The tubes and studs come in different sizes. The correct size will be selected for the laryngectomee by the ENT department.

## Cleaning

The two tubes can be washed under the tap, soaked in a sodium bicarbonate solution or disinfected in Antiseptic Solution. A bristle brush or pipe cleaner may be necessary to remove difficult crusts. Brushes are available on prescription.

## Stoma Protectors

These are used:

To warm and filter the air before it passes directly into the lungs.

To prevent secretions from staining clothes.

To provide a covering which is more acceptable to the general public, and may make you feel less self-conscious.

## **Buchanan Protector**

These are available, free of charge, on prescription, in two sizes, packs of 10, one month's supply.

## **Delta-Nex Protectors**

Similar to Buchanan Protectors, but using Velcro, some laryngectomees find these easier to put on.

## **Laryngofoam**

These small foam squares are adhesive and should only be used once and thrown away. Boxes of 30 squares are provided (i.e. approximately one month's supply) on prescription. Available in Flesh and White, free of charge on prescription.

## **Hirst Bib**

They are available in packs of 10, free of charge, on prescription.

## **Softshield Laryngectomy Protectors**

They are available on prescription in two sizes and three colours white, blue and beige.

# Clothing

## **Romet**

This turtleneck cover comes in 10 colours, in pure cotton and fastens with Velcro behind the neck. Laryngectomees find these particularly attractive when worn under open-necked shirt or blouses. They are fully washable and last for a long time - although they are not available on prescription.

## **Blom-Singer Foam Stoma Protectors**

These protectors come with an adhesive strip on one edge for easy attachment and access to the stoma. Available in a pack of 60 or in two four foot strips for customising.

## **Individual Preferences**

### **Crocheted Covers**

There are a variety of patterns available for people who wish to make their own.

### **Cravats**

Some laryngectomees like using cravats or scarfs which are lighter in weight and less conspicuous.

### **Cloth Stoma Protectors**

They come in eight colours, a discreet and comfortable way to cover the stoma for men and women. Looks like a shirt and slips easily under other layers of clothing.

### **Shower Shields**

Various types available. See useful addresses.

## **Remember**

The Buchanan, Laryngofoam, Delta-Nex, Hirst protectors and Softshields are on prescription from your GP (see also Useful Addresses) Romet stoma covers are available from Kapitex. Patterns for knitted, sewn or crochet stoma covers may be obtained from NALC (see address).

The second button down from the collar of the blouse or shirt can be cut off and sewn on top of the buttonhole. This gives a normal appearance to the shirt, but gives quick ACCESS to the neck opening to wipe away mucus after a cough or sneeze.

Remember, when sneezing or coughing, a tissue should be held over the STOMA - not the mouth! Often a 'two-handed' cough can be effective - one hand (with tissue) over the stoma and the other over the mouth. This makes for a more normal appearance.

Most of the items mentioned in this pamphlet will be available from the Head & Neck ward at the hospital. However, if you encounter difficulties, NALC may be able to help you.

Help and advice on stoma care are always available from your Head & Neck department. Do not hesitate to ask questions which bother you.

## Useful Addresses

### **Stoma Covers, Patterns and General Information**

The National Association of  
Laryngectomee Clubs

*Lower Ground Floor  
152 Buckingham Palace Road  
London SW1W 9TR*

*Tel: 020 7730 8585*

*Fax 020 7730 8584*

*info@laryngectomy.org.uk*

*www.laryngectomy.org.uk*

### **Trachi-Naze, Buchanan, Laryngofoam, Romet, Velcro Holders, Tracheostomy Cleaning Brushes, Bristle Brushes, Atomisers and Shower Shields**

Kapitex Healthcare Ltd

*Kapitex House, 1 Sandbeck Way  
Wetherby, West Yorkshire LS22 4GH  
Tel: 01937 580211*

### **Provox Stoma Filter and Shower Aid**

Platon Medical Ltd

*PO Box 2568*

*Eastbourne*

*East Sussex BN21 3HZ*

*Tel: 01323 431930*

### **Blom-Singer HumidiFilter System, Foam Stoma Protectors, Cloth Stoma Protectors, Laryngectomy Tubes, Shower Guard and Collar**

Forth Medical Ltd

*Forth House, 42 Kingfisher Court  
Hambridge Road*

*Newbury*

*Berkshire RG14 5SJ*

*Tel: 01635 550100*

### **Nebulisers and Suction Machines**

Please contact NALC Head Office  
020 7730 8585

### **Softshield, Shower Shields.**

Insight Medical Products

Unit 1-4, Silk Mill Studios

2 Charlton Road

Tetbury

Gloucestershire GL8 8DY

Tel: 01666 500 055

