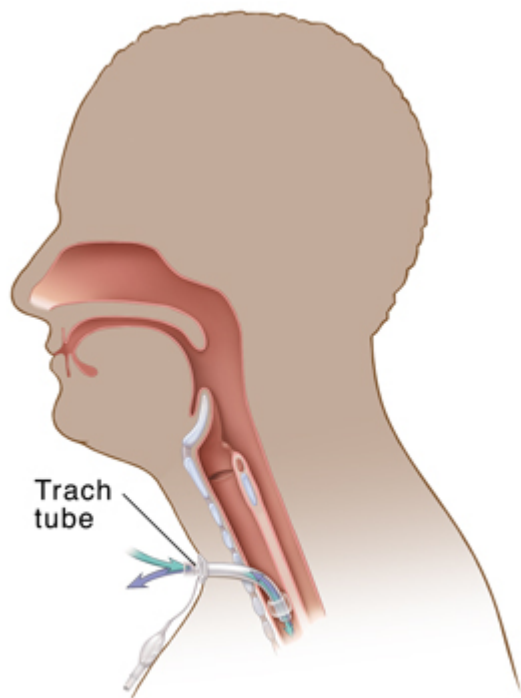


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# Tracheostomy Tube or Stoma: Your New Airway

## If you have a tracheostomy tube

Your tracheostomy (trach) tube has been chosen to fit well and work right for you. You'll learn how to keep it clean and clear. Often, a trach tube is needed for only a short time. Your surgeon will tell you how long to use the tube. If you don't need a new airway after surgery, the hole in the front of your throat will close on its own after the trach tube has been removed. You will have a dressing over the site while it heals. In some cases, surgery is needed to close the hole.



## If you have a stoma

If your larynx was removed during surgery, you'll continue to breathe through the hole in your throat. This hole is called a stoma or permanent tracheostomy. It's important that you and those who care for you know that this is your only airway. In a medical emergency, healthcare providers won't be able to put in a breathing tube through your nose or mouth. You'll be shown how to care for your stoma. Support groups can help you adjust to having a new airway. And you can return to work, family life, and many of the activities you enjoyed before surgery.

You will need follow-up visits for your tracheostomy and its care.

## When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these problems:

- A red or painful stoma

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- Small amount of bleeding, that stops promptly, from the tube or stoma
  - Yellow, smelly, bloody, or thick mucus around or inside your stoma
  - Pain while cleaning your airway
  - Persistent cough

## Call 911

**Call 911** if any of the following occur:

- Trouble breathing or wheezing
- Coughing up blood
- Large amount of bleeding, or persistent bleeding, from the tracheostomy site
- Swelling around the trach tube or stoma