

# Caring for Your Child's Tracheostomy

At first, you may feel a little cautious and nervous about caring for your child's trach.

But each time you do it, it will get easier and you'll get more comfortable with it.

The two main things you'll need to learn are how to suction and how to keep the stoma clean.

Let's start with suctioning.

Suctioning removes the mucus and secretions from your child's trach tube.

It's done when coughing can't clear your child's trach tube.

Suction as often as your doctor recommends or as needed.

Before you leave the hospital, your care team will teach you exactly how to do this.

Once you're home, follow the directions you were given to set up and use the suctioning machine.

Have your suction supplies ready, including a fully charged machine.

Always wash your hands with soap and water before and after you suction.

It's best to wear disposable gloves when you're suctioning.

Now let's talk about the stoma.

The stoma is the opening in your child's neck.

You'll need to clean the stoma 2 times a day and as needed.

It's important to wash your hands with soap and water before and after you clean the stoma.

And be sure to wear disposable gloves.

To get started, you'll need sterile water or sterile saline, 8 or 10 cotton swabs, 1 small cup, a dry cloth, and skin ointment.

In the cup, pour the sterile water or sterile saline.

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Next, using the cotton swabs and sterile water or sterile saline, clean and remove dried mucus around the stoma.

Now, dry your child's skin with the cloth.

Follow your doctor's instructions for using the ointment for the stoma.

Most children don't have any problems with their trach.

But you know your child best, so if something doesn't seem right, you can always call your care team.

If your child is having severe trouble breathing or if the trach tube falls out and you can't get it back in, get emergency help right away.

Call your doctor if your child has trouble breathing after suctioning; if the mucus and secretions from the trach tube change, such as looking brown or bloody; or if your child's skin around the stoma shows signs of infection, like increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness; red streaks leading from the area; or pus draining from the site.

Cleaning and suctioning the trach helps your child breathe easily and helps you avoid problems.

If you're a little nervous right now, that's okay.

Just think back on all the ways you've always taken care of your child.

You can do this too.

And if you have any concerns, you can always talk with your care provider.