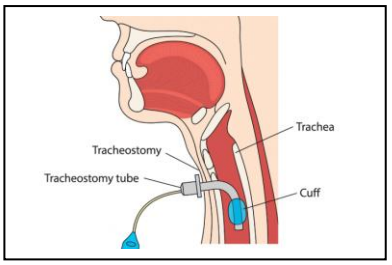
ADULT INPATIENT TRACHEOSTOMY CARE TEAM

WHAT IS A TRACHEOSTOMY (TRACH) TUBE?

- A **tracheostomy** is a surgical procedure where a small opening (called a *stoma*) is made in the front of the neck into the **trachea** (windpipe).
- A **tracheostomy tube (trach tube)** is then placed through this opening to help air reach the lungs.
- Tracheostomies can be **temporary or permanent**.
- A trach tube may be needed when a person:
    - Cannot breathe normally through their nose or mouth.
    - Needs long-term support from a ventilator.
    - Has severe injury, swelling, or blockage of the airway.
    - Needs better removal of mucus or secretions from the lungs.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A TRACH TUBE?

- **Life Saving:** A trach tube is life saving
- **Improved breathing:** Makes it easier to breathe when the upper airway is blocked or weak.
- **Easier to clear secretions:** Helps suction mucus directly from the lungs.
- **Better comfort for long-term ventilation:** More comfortable and safer than having a breathing tube through the mouth.
- **Makes it easier to wean from a ventilator:** Allows gradual reduction of machine support.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF A TRACH TUBE?

Minor Risks

- Bleeding or bruising around the tube site.
- Temporary pain or infection at the tube site.
- Mucus blocks the tube.
- Temporary or permanent loss of voice or ability to swallow. Change in appearance.

Serious Risks

- **Serious bleeding:** Can occur during or after the procedure, requiring urgent attention.
- **Collapsed lung:** Air leaks into the chest cavity.
- **Damage to nearby structures:** Including nerves, blood vessels, or the thyroid gland.
- **Damage to the windpipe (trachea):** Narrowing or enlargement of the windpipe (trachea) over time, which may cause breathing problems.
- **Damage to the swallowing tube:** A rare but serious complication where an abnormal connection forms between the windpipe (trachea) and swallowing tube (esophagus).
- **Damage to blood vessels:** A rare but serious complication where an abnormal connection forms between the windpipe (trachea) and large blood vessels.
- **Airway obstruction:** From mucus plugs, displaced tubes, or tissue growth.
- **Death (rare):** Can occur if the airway becomes blocked, the tube falls out, or if damage to nearby structures is serious.

MICHAEL GARRON HOSPITAL
TORONTO EAST HEALTH NETWORK

LIVING WITH A TRACH TUBE

- **Daily Care:**
  - Keep the skin around the stoma clean and dry.
  - Suction mucus as instructed to prevent blockage.
  - Replace or clean the inner cannula as directed.
  - Avoid water entering the tube when bathing or showering.
  - Trach tubes need to be changed from time to time.
- **Speaking:**
  - Some people can't speak with a trach tube making communication hard.
  - Some people can speak using a **speaking valve** (if cleared by a doctor or therapist).
  - Speech therapists can help
- **Eating and Drinking:**
  - Some people can't swallow with a trach tube and need a feeding tube.
  - Speech-language pathologists check swallowing safety.
- **Activity:**
  - Most people can move with a trach tube and do activities of daily living.
  - Always keep emergency supplies (spare tube, suction device) nearby.
- **Emotional and Social Adjustment:**
  - Support from family, healthcare providers, and tracheostomy support groups can help.

WHO IS MY CARE TEAM?

Patients with a trach tube who are admitted to hospital will be seen by the **Adult Inpatient Tracheostomy Care Team.** Your care team will:

- Check your condition.
- Clear your tube by suctioning.
- Change your tube if needed. Sometimes they use a small camera to help.
- Cap the trach tube so you can talk when you are well enough.
- Check if you can swallow foods when you are well enough.
- Take the tube out if it is no longer needed (in some cases).

Your care team has doctors, respiratory therapists, and other healthcare professionals.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

You and your loved ones should learn how to care for your trach tube. It is very helpful to learn how to suction your airway. Here is where you can learn more:

- Ask your Respiratory Therapist (RT). Your RT will visit you often while you are in hospital.
- Ontario Provincial Long-Term Ventilation Strategy website at https://ontariolongtermventilation.com/index.html
- Watch the videos at https://ontariolongtermventilation.com/patient-or-caregiver-e-learning-modules.html
- Watch the videos at https://www.westpark.org/en/LTVCOE/LearningModules
- Watch the videos at https://www.canventottawa.ca/

The hospital has wifi. Click on the network called "MGH Guest Network". You do not need a password.

If you are discharged home with a trach tube, please review how to take care of your trach tube. Please review your outpatient follow-up plan.

October 2025

MICHAEL GARRON HOSPITAL
TORONTO EAST HEALTH NETWORK