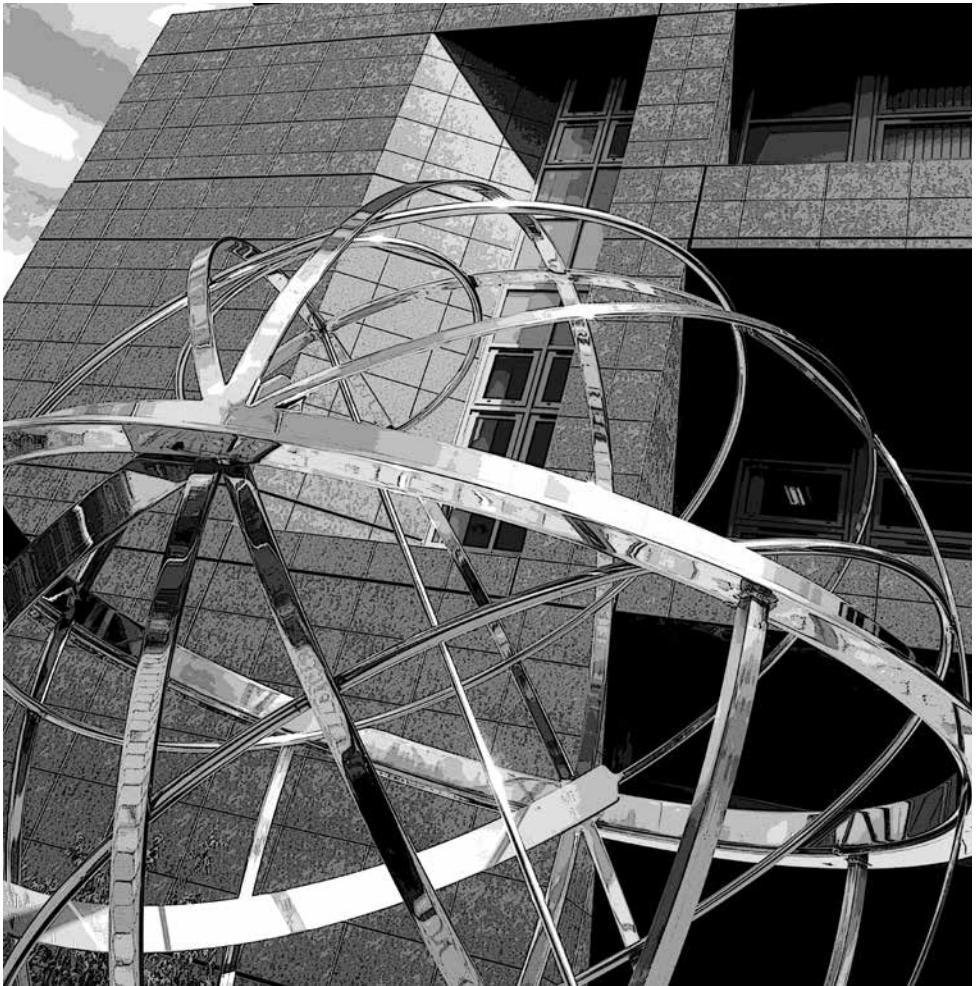


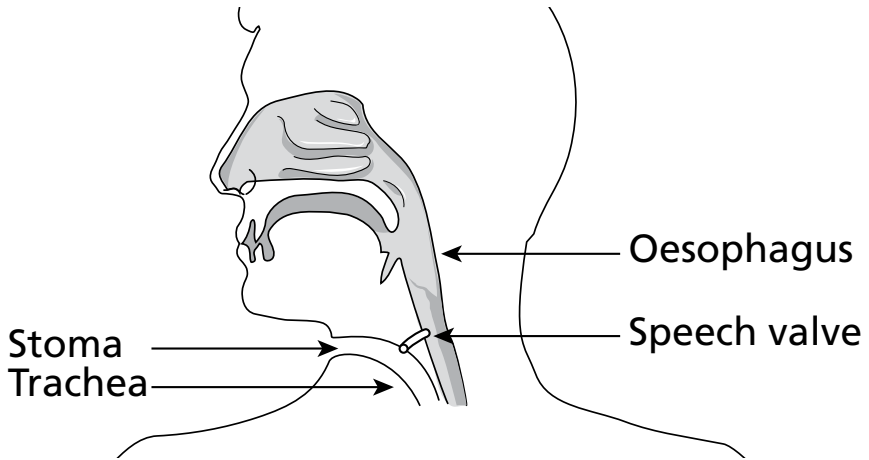
Oxford Centre for Head and Neck Oncology

Tracheo-oesophageal Speech Valve – your new voice

Information for patients



You now have a speech valve that you can use to make a 'voice'. The valve works by allowing air to pass from your windpipe (trachea) into your swallowing tube (oesophagus). The air vibrates in the oesophagus, creating the sound of your new 'voice'.



How do I make my new voice?

To make your voice you need to cover the breathing opening (stoma) in your neck, either with a finger or thumb, or if you are using a heat moisture exchanger (HME), press the filter cassette in to re-direct the air as you breathe out.

The pattern for 'voicing' is:

- Breathe in.
- Cover stoma or press filter cassette to re-direct air.
- Breathe out and talk.
- Uncover to allow next breath in.
- Cover again, breathe out and talk.

Try to keep relaxed, covering your stoma with firm, but not hard pressure. If you are using your finger or thumb, cover the stoma as if you are covering the top of a bottle. You should not need a lot of pressure to get a voice.

Keep practicing – the more you use your new voice the easier it should become.

How do I look after the speech valve?

Your chest produces mucus that needs cleaning away from your valve, so that the air can continue to pass through. You will have been given a small brush for cleaning the valve.

Gently place the brush in the opening of the valve and twist in one direction pulling out any mucus. You may need to do this three to four times a day. Careful cleaning of the valve will give you the clearest voice and reduce leakage problems (see next section).

Treat your cleaning brush like a toothbrush. Wash it well after you have used it, then allow it to dry in an upright position. Replace it regularly (after 1-2 weeks) or when it begins to look worn.

New voice prosthesis brushes are available on prescription through your GP. Your Speech and Language Therapist can tell you which brush you need to use.

If you use the Countrywide Supplies Ltd. ordering service, valve cleaning brushes can be re-ordered free of charge when needed.

When does the valve need changing?

The valve needs changing if you cough immediately after drinking; if you see fluids leaking through the valve; or if your stoma cover (bib) or filter cassettes (HME) are stained with what you have drunk. If you have one, use a "plug" to block the valve, so that you can eat and drink safely until the valve is changed.

If you don't have a plug or are unable to put the plug in, thicken your drinks using the thickening powder sachets provided. Thicker drinks are less likely to leak through your valve. You can get more thickening powder on prescription from your GP. It can also be helpful to take small sips when drinking, to reduce the amount of liquid leaking through the valve.

Contact us when the valve needs changing

Telephone the Oxford Speech and Language Therapy Department on 01865 231 205 or 01865 741 841 and ask for the Speech Therapist on bleep 6319. You can also phone or text on 07795 291 415. Please call or text before coming to make sure a therapist is available to see you. If we are unable to take your call please leave a message and we will phone you back as soon as we can.

Valve replacement is carried out by the Speech and Language Therapists in the Blenheim Head and Neck Unit, Churchill Hospital, Old Road, Headington, Oxford, OX3 7LJ. The hours for valve changes during the week are usually Monday to Friday, between 11.30am and 12.30pm.

If your call has not been returned by the end of the day, or if you are calling out of office hours, please telephone the Blenheim Head and Neck Ward on 01865 223 535 (24 hours) for advice.

How to contact us if you need further information

If you have any questions or concerns, or need any further information, then please contact:

Oxford Speech and Language Therapy Department

Tel: 01865 231 205 or 01865 741 841 and ask for bleep 6319
(Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm, answerphone available)
You can also send a text to: 07795 291 415

Head and Neck Cancer Specialist Nurses

Tel: 01865 234 346 (Monday to Friday, 8.00am to 4.00pm)

You will also have been given our leaflet "Information for patients about the Head and Neck Team", which contains details of the staff you will meet, additional support and websites, etc. that you may find helpful.

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

Compiled with the help from the Head & Neck Oncology Team & users

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust

Oxford OX3 9DU

www.ouh.nhs.uk/information

