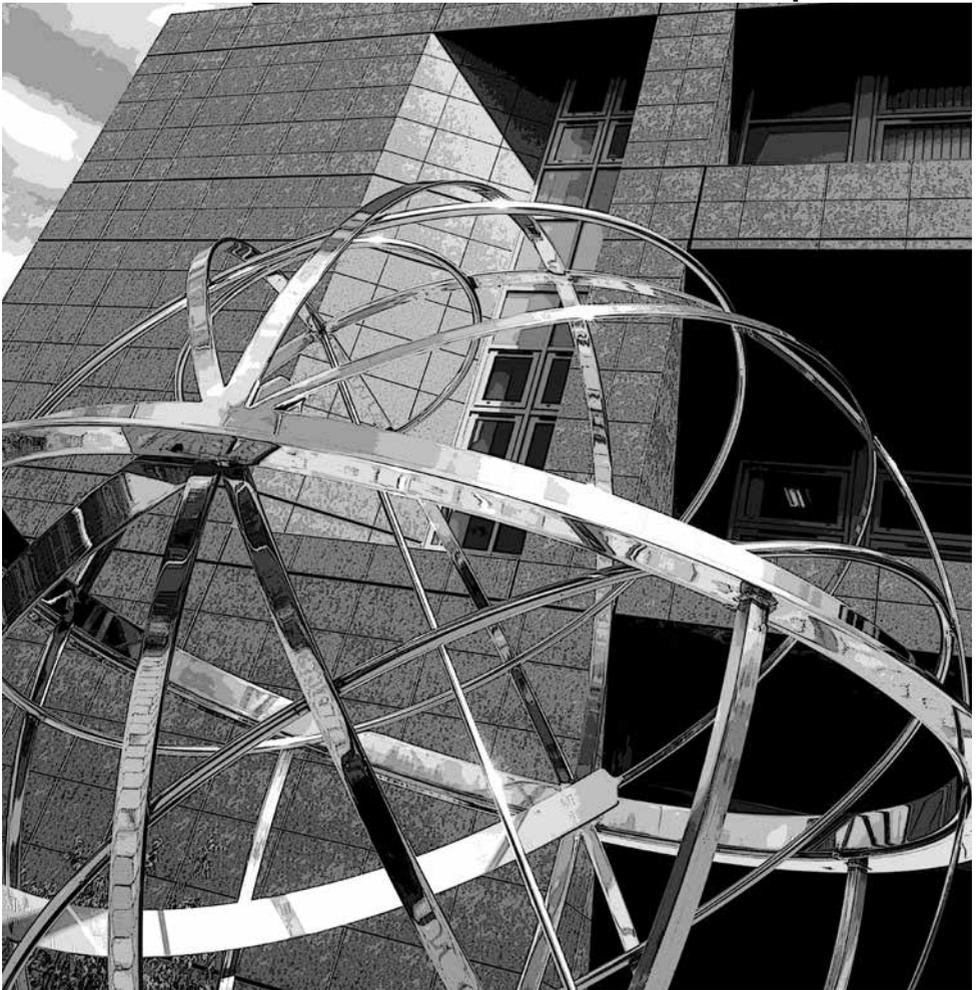


Oxford Centre for Head and Neck Oncology

Laryngectomy Stoma Care

Information for patients



Introduction

This booklet has been written as a guide to help you look after your stoma after your laryngectomy. It has been compiled by experienced staff, to answer the questions most frequently asked by patients. The information it contains is only a guide; your healthcare team will be able to give you more detailed information if you need it. We hope you and your family will find the information both reassuring and supportive.

Cleaning your stoma

Before you leave hospital you will be taught how to care for your stoma. This will become easier as you get into a routine. You need to check for secretions in and around your stoma at least three times a day (such as morning, lunchtime and before bed). Do not allow any secretions to build up around your stoma area or down your windpipe as it will make you cough and may affect your breathing.

You will have chest secretions to cough up and clean away from your stoma area. Hold some clean, disposable tissue near to your stoma, take some deep breaths, then cough any secretions to the top of your windpipe and wipe away. You will also need to remove and clean your laryngectomy tube when you clean your stoma.

To clean your stoma you will need:

- a freestanding table mirror
 - a good light source or a pen torch
 - gauze swabs or disposable tissues
 - cooled, boiled water while your stoma is still healing, then tap water once your stoma has healed.
1. Once you have removed your laryngectomy tube, clean around your stoma with dry tissues or gauze and wipe away

any secretions gently. You will need to do this carefully on the inside of your stoma to avoid making yourself cough.

2. Moisten any dried secretions with damp gauze and wipe away gently, or remove with clean fingers or Tilly forceps you were given from the ward. Dry the outside of your stoma afterwards so your skin is not damp. Using a good light or pen torch, check that the inside of your stoma is clear. Do not probe down into your stoma too deeply. If you are unable to remove the dried secretions ask your District Nurse for help.
3. When your stoma is clean, reinsert a clean laryngectomy tube if required.

Clean your laryngectomy tube with cold or warm soapy water under the tap. Use a soft brush if needed, to get rid of the secretions or crusts. Make sure you completely rinse any remaining soap off with clean water or this may irritate your stoma.

The skin around your stoma may occasionally become sore. Apply a cream such as Vaseline, E45, Cavilon or aqueous cream to protect your skin. These can be bought over the counter or as a free prescription from your GP.

Never cut up small pieces of gauze to clean around the stoma as fragments may fall into your windpipe.

Do not use cotton wool, as you may accidentally breathe in small fibres, causing irritation in your airway which can be difficult to relieve.

If you place your hand near your stoma you will feel the air on your hand as you breathe in and out. This will reassure you that your airway is clear.

Report any changes in your stoma such as size, redness or sores to your GP, District Nurse, Speech and Language Therapist or Head and Neck Specialist Nurse.

The size of your stoma

Your stoma should be at least the size of your thumb and may shrink as part of the healing process. After about 6 months this will usually settle down. You will be discharged from the ward with a small tube called a laryngectomy tube. After your surgery, until your healing is complete we advise that you wear the laryngectomy tube at night (or for 12 hours in the day) in order to keep your stoma at a reasonable size. The laryngectomy tube can also be used to check the size of your stoma by putting it in daily. If it is a tight fit then we would recommend that you keep it in to stretch the stoma. If you lose the laryngectomy tube or need a new one please contact the Head and Neck Specialist Nurses on **01865 234 346**.

How to keep your mucus thin

It is important to keep your mucus thin so that it is easy to cough up.

- You should always wear a stoma protector such as a Buchanan Bib, Laryngofoam or Heat Moisture Exchanger (HME: baseplate and cassette). These are available on prescription and will moisten your mucus, helping to keep it thin. While you are in hospital, your nurse or Speech and Language Therapist will discuss this with you.
- Drinking plenty of water will help to keep your body tissues moist, which will help keep the secretions in your lungs thin.
- Practice deep breathing exercises.
- Breathing in steam from a bowl of hot water may be helpful if your mucous is becoming thick and difficult to cough up. Be careful with the water temperature if your stoma is sore or still healing.
- Plastic spray bottles can also be used to moisten the air you breathe. Nursing staff will show you how to do this.

- Your mucus may change according to the time of year. Your mucous may also become thicker during a cold so you may need to check your stoma more frequently during this time.

General information

- During the summer there are more flies, wasps, etc. in the air which may present a hazard to your stoma if it is unprotected. Ensure you wear a stoma protector or HME.
- You need to take care not to get water into your stoma as it will go straight into your lungs. You can use a plastic shower shield to protect your lungs when showering or bathing. These are available on prescription from your GP. HME shower attachments can be purchased directly from the manufacturer for a small fee. We will give you an order form and will tell you how to order them.
- Do not go swimming unless you have the correct breathing equipment and have had lessons on how to use it. Your local laryngectomy support group may run lessons, or contact the National Association of Laryngectomee Clubs (NALC).
- Take care not to spray aerosols such as deodorant or perfume too near your stoma as this may irritate your airway and cause coughing.
- During hot weather, take care to protect your skin from the sun – a sunburnt stoma is very painful.
- While on the beach, take care not to get sand in your stoma – wear a stoma protector.
- As a permanent stoma patient you are entitled to free prescriptions. Please ask your GP for an exemption certificate to send off for an exemption card, if you currently pay.

Further information or questions

If you have any further questions please contact us for advice:

Head and Neck Cancer Specialist Nurses

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

Blenheim Head and Neck Ward

Tel: 01865 223 536 or 223 537 (24 hours)

Speech and Language Therapists

Tel: 01865 231 205 (Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm)

Useful addresses

The National Association of Laryngectomy Clubs
Lower Ground Floor
152 Buckingham Palace Road
London
SW1W 9TR

Tel: 0207 730 8585

Email: info@laryngectomy.org.uk

Website: www.laryngectomy.org.uk

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**

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