A small opening has been made in your child's windpipe to help make breathing easier. Your child now breathes in and out through this tracheostomy ("trach") rather than through his nose and mouth.

**What do I need to learn to care for my child's tracheostomy?**

You will be taught how to care for your child's tracheostomy before you take him home. Care of the tracheostomy at home involves:

- Suctioning the tracheostomy.
- Keeping the area around the tracheostomy clean to prevent skin irritation.
- Providing moisture (mist). Because the air is no longer filtered, warmed and moistened by passing through the nose and mouth, it needs to have moisture added. This also helps to keep the mucus liquid so it can be removed from the tracheostomy tube by suctioning and coughing.

You will also be taught how to clean and change the tracheostomy tube and ties. The ties holding the tracheostomy tube in place need to be changed every day. The tracheostomy tube will also need to be removed and replaced with a clean tube on a regular basis (usually once or twice a week).

If your child goes home on a ventilator, you will be taught how to use it.

**What supplies will be needed at home to care for my child's tracheostomy? How will I get these supplies?**

Supplies needed for tracheostomy care at home will be provided by a home medical equipment supply company. This will be arranged before you take your child home. Some supplies will be provided by the medical equipment supply company, but some supplies may need to be purchased by the parent or caregiver at local stores.

The following supplies will be needed at home (and are typically supplied by the home medical supply company):

- Suction machine and suction catheters (size __________)
- Tracheostomy tubes (size __________) and one size smaller than usual (size __________)
- Ties to hold the tube in place
- Air compressor with humidifier or other device to provide mist to keep the breathing passages moist. If a ventilator is needed to assist breathing, humidity will be provided through its tubing
- Tracheostomy mask (collar) and tubing to connect mask to mist or ventilator and tubing
- Tracheostomy cleaning kits
• 2x2 split-gauze or other recommended dressing to go between tracheostomy tube and skin under it
• Breathing and heart monitor or oxygen saturation monitor (optional for older children)
• Tracheostomy filters (artificial nose)
• Clean gloves for alternate caregivers
• Resuscitation bag
• Special stroller if going home on a ventilator

The following supplies will need to be purchased by parent or caregiver:

• Solid containers to store supplies
• Hand sanitizer
• Hydrogen peroxide
• Distilled water
• Pipe cleaners
• Cotton swabs (i.e., Q-Tips®)
• Water-soluble lubricant (K-Y® Jelly or Surgilube®)
• Normal saline
• Dish soap
• Travel bag to store and transport supplies when traveling away from home with your child

Supplies to take when traveling away from home or to school:

• Portable suction machine, fully charged
• Trach tube of the same size (including obturator) with ties attached and one trach tube that is one size smaller than usual size
• Suction catheters
• Gloves
• Water soluble lubricant
• Saline vials
• Resuscitation bag
• Hand sanitizer
Safety Precautions:

- Smoke, aerosol sprays, powders, heavy dust and cleaning products with strong fumes (such as bleach and ammonia) are irritating when breathed through a tracheostomy. These things should be avoided.

- Avoid using fuzzy blankets, toys or clothing with loose fibers that could be "breathed" into your child's tracheostomy.

- Dress your child in clothing that does not cover the tracheostomy.

- Encourage other family members and responsible friends to learn tracheostomy care and CPR, so they can baby-sit and give you a break.

- Supervise bathing and water play. Do not let water get into your child’s tracheostomy. **Never leave a baby or child alone in a tub!!!!!**

- Do not allow your child to play alone with toys that have small parts that could be removed and put into his tracheostomy.

- Keep an extra tracheostomy tube at your child's bedside. Take along an extra tracheostomy tube (one size smaller) and other supplies (suction machine and breathing bag) whenever you leave home with your child.

- Order supplies from your home equipment company well in advance of running out of supplies.

Call your child's doctor or the Children’s Mercy Hospital Information Line at (816) 234-3188 if:

- Your child has a fever over 100° F (37.8° C) taken under the arm.

- Mucus suctioned from the tracheostomy changes color (not clear or white) or smells bad.

- Food or blood is suctioned from your child's tracheostomy.

- You are unable to replace the same size tracheostomy tube.

Call your emergency number (911) if your child has difficulty breathing that does not improve with suctioning or changing the tube.

See other "Tracheostomy Care" CARE CARDS for information on suctioning the tracheostomy; changing the tracheostomy ties and skin care; changing the tracheostomy tube; cleaning the tracheostomy tube and ties; and CPR.