Tracheomalacia is a condition in which the cartilage of the airway is not formed correctly or absent. Without good cartilage support, the airway can become narrow. This makes it hard for a child to breathe out. There are also heart and blood vessel abnormalities that can cause this condition.

Treatment of tracheomalacia includes control of respiratory infections and secretions. In many babies, this condition usually improves within 6 months to 12 months. For some children symptoms may continue for years.

**Home Care:**

Your child may have the following symptoms:

- Noisy breathing (stridor)
- Coughing (may be harsh or “honking”)
- Wheezing
- Chest retractions (tugging in of skin between ribs)

These symptoms will usually be worse when your child has a cold. You can help your child by trying to keep him calm. When he cries, the airway narrows and makes it harder to breathe. One way to think of this is to remember how a straw collapses when you drink a thick shake. The harder you suck on the straw, the more it collapses.

If your baby is having problems eating or drinking, or is not eating enough to grow well, he should be evaluated by his doctor. Some children may need supportive respiratory therapy or surgery.

**Call 911 or take him to the nearest emergency room if he:**

- Becomes blue (lips, skin, fingernails).
- Has sucking-in movements around the ribs (skin tugs in between the ribs) that are more severe than usual.
- Has difficulty breathing.
- Becomes hard to arouse or is less alert than usual.