

ACH Tracheostomy and Ventilator Education Program: Glossary of Terms

A

Aerosol:

A mist of very small particles suspended in a gas – the misting of water droplets you can see in a humidity set up, suspended in either air or oxygen

Apnea:

When breathing is not happening for more than 20 seconds; not breathing

Artificial Nose:

Another name for a Heat and Moisture Exchanger (HME) – used to provide portable humidity

Artificial airway:

A tube placed in the airway to support breathing - either an endotracheal tube (a tube that can be inserted into the mouth or nose) or a tracheostomy tube (a tube that is surgically placed in the neck)

Aspiration:

When anything other than air enters the airway – food or liquids

B

Bacteria:

Germs that cause infection

Bagger:

Another name for an Ambu bag, bagging unit, or manual resuscitator – a self-inflating breathing bag that can provide breaths by connecting to the tracheostomy tube or by a mask that can be placed over the mouth and nose

Bronchoscopy: A lighted tube and camera that can be placed into a child's airway to help see the airway, take samples, and suction secretions

C

Cannula:

A small tube – the tube part of the tracheostomy tube that sits inside the trachea

Carbon Dioxide (CO₂):

The waste gas eliminated from the lungs when breathing out

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR):

Rescue breathing and compressions that are used to support breathing and circulation when a person has stopped breathing or their heart has stopped

Cuff:

An inflatable balloon on some tracheostomy tubes that helps seal the air around the tube

Cyanosis:

A bluish color of the skin and mucus membranes because of low levels of oxygen in the blood

D**Decannulation:**

A planned removal of the tracheostomy tube

Dislodgement:

When the tracheostomy tube comes out accidentally

Dyspnea:

Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath

Dysphagia:

Difficulty swallowing or eating

E**Edema:**

Swelling of tissue

F**Fenestration:**

A hole in the cannula of larger trach tubes that can allow for airflow to help with speech

Flange:

The part of the trach tube that sits on the neck where the ties are attached on either side

H**Heat and moisture exchanger (HME):**

A humidifying filter that can be placed in a ventilator circuit or directly onto the end of the tracheostomy tube that filters, warms, and humidifies the air breathed in

Heavy Duty Compressor Humidifier:

A machine that provides non-portable humidified air or oxygen through a trach collar

Hypoxemia:

A low amount of oxygen in the blood

I**Instill:**

When a solution like sterile normal saline is inserted into the tracheostomy tube to help clear secretions or a medication like Tobramycin is inserted into the tracheostomy tube to treat respiratory infections

Indrawing:

Another word for retractions, when the accessory muscles are being used in respiratory distress to help the diaphragm with breathing – seen between the ribs, above the breast bone, above the collar bones, and below the breast bone

L**Lumen:**

The inside of the tracheostomy tube through which air passes

M**Mucus:**

The fluid that collects in the mouth, nose, airways and trachea produced by the mucous membranes; also known as secretions

N**Normal Saline:**

A medical solution of water and salt that can be instilled

O**Obstruction:**

A complete or partial blockage of the tracheostomy tube

Obturator:

The guide that goes in the tracheostomy tube to help insert the tube into the trachea properly

P**Patent:**

Open and unobstructed; the tracheostomy tube should be patent

R**Respite:**

When temporary safe supportive care can be provided by trained caregivers to provide relief for family caregivers

S**Speaking valve:**

A one way valve that allows air movement to pass through the vocal cords to help with speech

Stoma:

The hole in the neck where the tracheostomy tube sits

Sterile:

Very clean and free from germs

Suctioning:

A way to remove mucus or saliva with a suction catheter and a suction machine

T**Tracheostomy:**

A small surgical opening through the skin and into the windpipe; the stoma

Tracheotomy:

A surgical procedure that creates a tracheostomy

Tracheostomy Tube:

A molded plastic or silicone tube that is passed through the stoma into the airway to support the airway and breathing; also called a trach tube

Trach Collar:

A plastic mask that fits over the trachea to provide humidity and/or oxygen

V**Ventilator:**

A machine that helps a person breathe

Virus:

A germ that can cause illness

Vocal cords:

Two thin strips of tissue that sit in the upper airway that make sounds and can help protect the lower airway