Mucus and Your Child’s Tracheostomy

What is mucus?
Mucus, also called secretions, is the body’s way of cleaning the airway. Mucus is usually thin and clear or white in color.

Changes in mucus could be a sign your child has an infection. Some changes may be:
• Yellow
• Green
• Foul smell
• Thickening

If you see changes in your child’s mucus, call your child’s doctor.

What is a mucus plug?
When mucus collects in the trach tube or airway, it can create a plug. This can block air from flowing through the airway.

How to keep mucus plugs from forming
• Give your child plenty of fluids, by drinking or through a feeding tube.
• Use a mist collar when child is asleep or has thick mucus.
• Your child should always wear a heat and moisture exchanger (HME) when not attached to a mist collar.
• Suction your child’s tracheostomy once in the morning and once at night.
Signs of a plugged trach
• Fast, noisy, hard breathing
• Dry whistling sound from the trach tube
• Restlessness
• Clammy skin, sweating
• Complaints from your child that he or she cannot breath
• Difficulty passing a suction catheter through the trach tube
• Blue color around lips, nails, and skin
• Not breathing and your child does not wake to your touch

How to remove a mucus plug
1. Suction the tracheotomy tube.
2. If that doesn’t clear it, place 1-2 drops of saline into the trach tube and try to suction again.
3. If you cannot pass a suction catheter, change the trach tube.

Call 911 if your child is turning blue and not responding to you.

Now that you’ve read this:
☐ Tell your nurse or respiratory therapist what you would do if you notice your child’s mucus has changed. (Check when done.)

☐ Tell your nurse or respiratory therapist how you would know if your child has a mucus plug. (Check when done.)

☐ Tell your nurse or respiratory therapist what you would do if your child had a mucus plug. (Check when done.)

If you have any questions or concerns,
☐ call your child’s doctor or   ☐ call ______________________
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Name of Health Care Provider: _______________________________
Date returned: ____________  □  db

Family Review of Handout

Health care providers: Please teach families with this handout.
Families: Please let us know what you think of this handout.

Would you say this handout is hard to read?  □  Yes  □  No

Would you say this handout is hard to read?  □  Yes  □  No

easy to read?  □  Yes  □  No

Please circle the parts of the handout that were hard to understand.

Would you say this handout is interesting to read?  □  Yes  □  No

Why or why not?

Would you do anything differently after reading this handout?  □  Yes  □  No

If yes, what?

After reading this handout, do you have any questions about the subject?  □  Yes  □  No

If yes, what?
Is there anything you don’t like about the drawings? □ Yes □ No

If yes, what?

What changes would you make in this handout to make it better or easier to understand?

Thank you for your participation!
Please return your evaluation and the teaching material within one week to:

The Emily Center
Health Education Specialist
Phoenix Children’s Hospital
1919 East Thomas Road
Phoenix, AZ 85016-7710

602-933-1395

Thank you for helping us!