

Speaking Valve

A speaking valve is used to help people speak with tracheostomies (trach). This one-way valve connects to the trach tube. The valve opens when you breathe in. It allows air to pass into the trach. When you breathe out, the valve closes. Air flows around the trach tube and up through the vocal cords. This allows sounds to be made. You will breathe out through the mouth and nose instead of the trach.

Some people quickly adjust to breathing with the valve. Others need to slowly increase the time the valve is worn. Breathing out around the trach tube is more work than breathing out through the trach tube. After getting used to the valve, many people can use it all day.

Benefits of the Speaking Valve

- Restores the upper airway to help with breathing
- Helps you talk
- Better sense of smell
- Better sense of taste
- Easier to manage secretions
- Improves swallowing
- Helps you make progress toward trach tube removal
- Improves quality of life

Type of Speaking Valve:

How Often to Use:

Equipment Needed

- Speaking valve chosen by your provider
- A syringe (if you have a cuffed trach tube)
- Suction supplies

Safety Guidelines

- **Do not** wear the valve when sleeping.
- **Do not** wear during physical activity that increases the work of breathing.
- **Only wear the valve with supervision.** If you have been taught how to place and remove the valve, you may be given permission to use alone or with loved ones.
- **Remove the valve right away if you have any trouble breathing.**
- If the trach tube has a cuff, make sure to deflate the cuff with a syringe before putting the speaking valve on the trach. **The valve must not be used on trach tubes that have the cuff inflated.**

Tips

- Use humidification as much as possible when using the speaking valve to keep secretions thin.
- Oxygen can be used while the valve is in place.
- Do not wear the speaking valve during respiratory treatments.

Using the Speaking Valve at Home

Follow these steps when using your speaking valve.

- Wash hands.
- Suction the mouth and trach tube. You may not be able to use the valve if there are a lot of secretions or very thick secretions.
- Place speaking valve on the trach tube hub.
- When finished using the valve, remove it (and adapters if used). Replace with equipment used before the speaking valve was placed.
- Clean the speaking valve.

How to Clean the Speaking Valve

- Clean the valve daily.
- Use a mild soap in warm water to clean the valve and other supplies. (See instructions inside of the storage container.)
- Rinse well with sterile water. If the valve is not completely rinsed, the valve may get sticky.
- Let the valve and other supplies air dry before using again.
- **Do not use hot water, alcohol, peroxide, bleach, or ethylene oxide to clean.** These will destroy the rubber valve.

If the speaking valve becomes sticky, noisy, vibrates, or causes more resistance when inhaling, the speaking valve may need to be replaced.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 5/2021 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#8033.