

# Laryngectomy, Discharge Information

Patient Information

Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) Service

A laryngectomy is the surgical removal of the larynx (voicebox). A permanent opening has been made in the front of your neck through which you will now breathe. This is known as the **stoma**. At first, some shrinkage in the size of the stoma may occur.

There will no longer be a connection between your mouth, nose, windpipe (trachea) and lungs. Air will enter via the stoma, bypassing the normal filtering, moistening and warming functions performed by your nose.

The laryngectomy stoma is now your airway. This means the windpipe (trachea) is more susceptible to drying out.

## Speaking after your Laryngectomy

Your normal voice production will no longer be possible because your larynx, (voice box) has been removed. There will be many different life changes. A speech language therapist will help you to utilise different techniques to help you speak.

## Caring for your stoma

It may be helpful to have the assistance of a family member or caregiver when stoma cares are performed.

The stoma site should be cleaned at least twice a day (morning and evening). This will make it easier to breathe and ensure the air entering via the stoma is moistened.

Ensure the area around the stoma is clean and free from any crusty build up. Utilise clean tweezers to remove any dried secretions from the stoma

edges. Initially clean the area around the stoma with gauze or cotton buds and salt water. Do not use cotton wool balls as the wool fragments can fall off into your stoma.

You will be supplied with cotton buds, gauze and salt water ampoules when you are discharged. Further supplies of cotton buds can be purchased from your local supermarket.

To make a salt water solution, add a teaspoon of salt to a cup of boiled water that has been left to cool.

You can clean the area under and around the stoma with a damp soft flannel and dry.

## Laryngectomy protector

The foam protector is worn over the laryngectomy site to protect the airway and stoma. It can be sprayed lightly with a few drops of water before putting it on to wear to provide moistened humidified air. The protector can be hand washed with warm soapy water.

There are alternative protectors that can be purchased from the Cancer Society and products on the internet.

New Zealand supplier for Kapitex protectors is as follows:

W.M Bamford & Co. Ltd

12 Victoria Street

Lower Hutt

Ph (04) 566 1212

Fax (04) 569 6489

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## Diet

Increase your activity and fluid intake. This will help to thin the chest secretions and make them easier to cough up (expectorate).

It is important to eat a healthy normal diet and drink plenty of water to avoid constipation and keep a healthy weight. Your sense of smell may be altered as a result of a laryngectomy.

Keep to any existing special dietary requirements e.g. Diabetic diet.

The dietician can be contacted through the hospital if you have any concerns. They may request that you attend an outpatient follow up.

## Speech Language Therapy

There are different forms of communication following a laryngectomy and the Speech Language Therapist will assist with communication and voice rehabilitation.

## Voice rehabilitation

If on discharge the stoma gastric tube is still in place and secured to your chest and it accidentally falls out; attempt to reinsert the catheter that has been supplied on discharge into the small hole (fistula) at the back of the stoma.

If a voice prosthesis e.g. blom singer or provox is used and it accidentally falls out; attempt to insert the catheter that has been supplied on discharge into the small hole (fistula) at the back of the stoma.

If you are unable to reinsert a catheter you will need to seek assistance by attending your nearest emergency department as soon as possible.

Do not eat or drink until an ENT Doctor has reviewed the laryngectomy stoma and reinserted either your stoma gastric tube or voice prosthesis.

Remember swimming and putting your head under water is no longer possible with a laryngectomy. When having a shower the stream of water needs to be directed away from the laryngectomy stoma.

**In an emergency when there is difficulty breathing and/or shrinkage of the Laryngectomy stoma, call 111 for an ambulance**

## Follow –up

An ENT Outpatients follow up appointment will be sent in the mail. The dietician may also request an outpatient follow-up appointment.

## Additional comments:

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## Contact us

Wellington Hospital Main Outpatient  
Department, ENT Services

Phone: (04) 385 59999 ext. 80400

Hours: Monday to Friday 8am – 4:30pm (excluding public holidays)

*Or ENT Nurse Specialist*

Phone: 027 664 4621

Hours: Monday to Friday 8am – 4:30pm (excluding public holidays)

