

# Emergency tracheostomy management - Patent upper airway

## Call for airway expert help

**Look, listen & feel at the mouth and tracheostomy**

A Mapleson C system (e.g. 'Waters circuit') may help assessment if available

Use **waveform capnography** when available: exhaled carbon dioxide indicates a patent or partially patent airway

**Is the patient breathing?**

No

Yes

Call Resuscitation Team  
CPR if no pulse / signs of life

Apply high flow oxygen to **BOTH**  
the face and the tracheostomy

**Assess tracheostomy patency**

Remove speaking valve or cap (if present)

Remove inner tube

Some inner tubes need re-inserting to connect to breathing circuits

**Can you pass a suction catheter?**

No

Yes

Deflate the cuff (if present)

**Look, listen & feel at the mouth and tracheostomy**  
Use waveform capnography or Mapleson C if available

**The tracheostomy tube is patent**  
Perform tracheal suction  
Consider partial obstruction  
Ventilate (via tracheostomy) if not breathing  
Continue ABCDE assessment

**Is the patient stable or improving?**

No

Yes

**Tracheostomy tube partially obstructed or displaced**  
Continue ABCDE assessment

## REMOVE THE TRACHEOSTOMY TUBE

**Look, listen & feel at the mouth and tracheostomy. Ensure oxygen re-applied to face and stoma**  
Use Waveform capnography or Mapleson C if available

Call Resuscitation team  
CPR if no pulse / signs of life

No

Yes

Continue ABCDE  
assessment

## Primary emergency oxygenation

Standard **ORAL** airway manoeuvres  
Cover the stoma (swabs / hand). Use:  
Bag-valve-mask  
Oral or nasal airway adjuncts  
Supraglottic airway device e.g. LMA

**Tracheostomy STOMA** ventilation  
Paediatric face mask applied to stoma  
LMA applied to stoma

## Secondary emergency oxygenation

**Attempt ORAL intubation**  
**Prepare for difficult intubation**  
Uncut tube, advanced beyond stoma

**Attempt intubation of STOMA**  
Small tracheostomy tube / 6.0 cuffed ETT  
Consider Aintree catheter and fiberoptic  
'scope / Bougie / Airway exchange catheter