

Tracheostomy

What is a tracheostomy?

A tracheostomy is an opening (or hole) in the baby's trachea (windpipe, breathing tube) that is placed in the baby's neck. A trach (short for tracheostomy) tube is then placed into this hole. The trach tube goes into the trachea. The trachea branches off into 'bronchi' which go to the lungs. Your baby then breathes through this tube instead of his/her mouth or nose.

A tracheostomy is a surgical procedure and your baby is taken to the operating room and put to sleep so he/she doesn't feel anything.

Why does my baby need a tracheostomy?

Your baby needs a tracheostomy to help him/her breathe. There are many reasons why the trach is needed, and your doctor will discuss this with you. Some reasons are: your baby may need to be on a breathing machine for a long time, may have certain birth defects that affect breathing, may have noisy breathing caused by the windpipe problems, or a variety of other breathing issues.

How long will my baby need the tracheostomy?

How long your baby has the tracheostomy depends on the reason for needing it.

What happens if the tube falls out?

Immediately after surgery, the tube is stitched in so the tube does not come out. Your baby will be hospitalized during this time. After a week or two, if the tube falls out, the hole in the neck should not 'immediately' close. There is time to place a new tube into the hole.

Will my baby be able to have normal activity with a tracheostomy?

Generally, yes. Your baby may be more prone to respiratory infections, so don't allow anyone that is sick around the baby. Do not smoke around the baby. Your baby may be able to eat, bathe, and play as normal. Loose clothing will be needed around the neck area. A baby with a tracheostomy does need to be watched more closely throughout the day.

How do I take care of the tracheostomy at home?

Before your baby goes home, you will be shown how to care for the tracheostomy. The doctors and nurses will make sure that you are comfortable in caring for your baby.