

TIPS for Speaking with a Tracheoesophageal Fistula (TEF)

When you have a voice prosthesis, you talk by blocking off the stoma. Air travels through the prosthesis and into your throat where muscles vibrate and produce sound. You form the sounds and words by moving your tongue and lips.

Here are some tips for speaking with a voice prosthesis:

1. Relax your neck, shoulder and chest muscles.
2. Take a gentle breath.
3. Completely cover the stoma with your thumb or finger. It is important to get a seal over the whole opening. Your thumb or finger should not be placed on the voice prosthesis as the air needs to travel through the prosthesis to produce sound.
4. If you hear stoma noise when you are speaking, the seal is not complete. Change the position of your thumb or finger and try again.
5. Gently push air from your lungs through the prosthesis to produce sound and words. It is important not to push too hard.
6. Take your thumb or finger off the stoma and breathe after your sentence is over.
 - If you do not produce sound and words try steps 1 to 5 again.
 - If you still do not produce sound, clean your voice prosthesis. Make sure the centre is clear so mucus does not stop air from moving through the valve. Refer to the TEF cleaning tips handout.
 - Speak slowly and clearly.
 - If it seems like you are putting a lot of effort into talking or your voice is strained, contact your Speech-Language Pathologist at 905-521-6101.