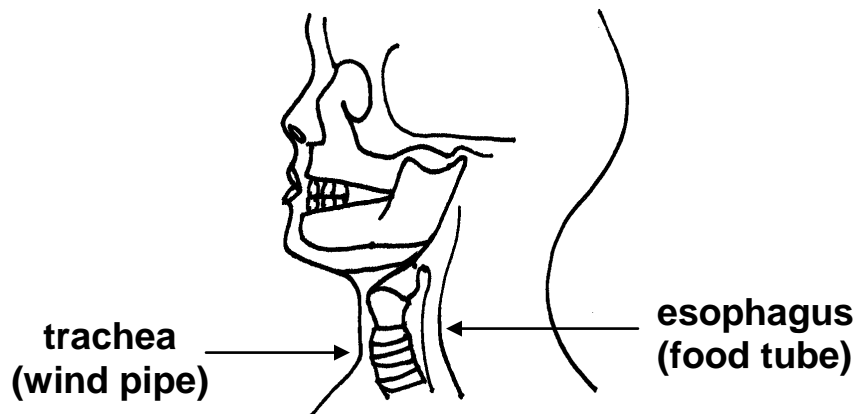


Tracheostomy in the Intensive Care Unit

What is a tracheostomy?

A tracheostomy is a procedure that makes an opening through the skin and the trachea in the neck. During this procedure the doctor puts a plastic tube in the opening.

The trachea is also called the wind pipe. The trachea is found in front of the esophagus or food tube in the neck.



What are the advantages of a tracheostomy?

There are many reasons a tracheostomy is done:

- it is a comfortable way to breathe
- a machine called a ventilator can be attached to the tube to help breathing
- there is lower risk of aspiration – this means that only air goes in and out of your lungs which is normal. This lowers your chance of other liquids from your stomach going into your lungs causing problems such as pneumonia.
- the tube makes it easy to remove secretions in the wind pipe
- it can be easier to wean off the ventilator machine when it is time to breathe on your own
- you may be able to talk during the time you are off a ventilator machine

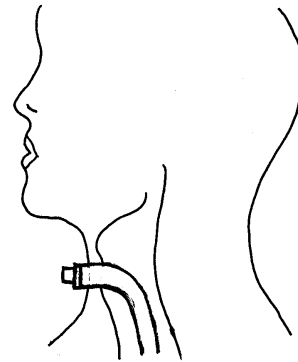
Where is a tracheostomy done?

This procedure is usually done under sedation so you are asleep during the procedure. The doctor decides if the procedure will be done in the operating room or the ICU patient room. No matter where it is done, members of the health care team are always in the room to help and look after you.

What does a tracheostomy look like?

The tracheostomy has 2 parts:

- the outer cannula or trach tube
- the inner cannula which is a smaller tube placed inside the trach tube



After the tracheostomy tube is put in

You stay on the ventilator breathing machine.

When the health team feels that you are ready to wean from the breathing machine the steps are explained and started.

When you can breathe on your own a special oxygen mask is placed over the tracheostomy.

When you no longer need the tracheostomy, the tube is removed and the hole in the skin closes and heals.

We are here to help

Talk to your nurse if you have questions about tracheostomy.

We are here to offer information and support.