

Tracheoesophageal Fistulization Surgery - TEF-

Before TEF Surgery

You and your family will get information about TEF surgery and speech from the Surgeon and the Speech-Language Pathologist. They will answer any questions you have. If you are interested, a meeting with a person who uses TEF speech can be arranged.

What is TEF Surgery?

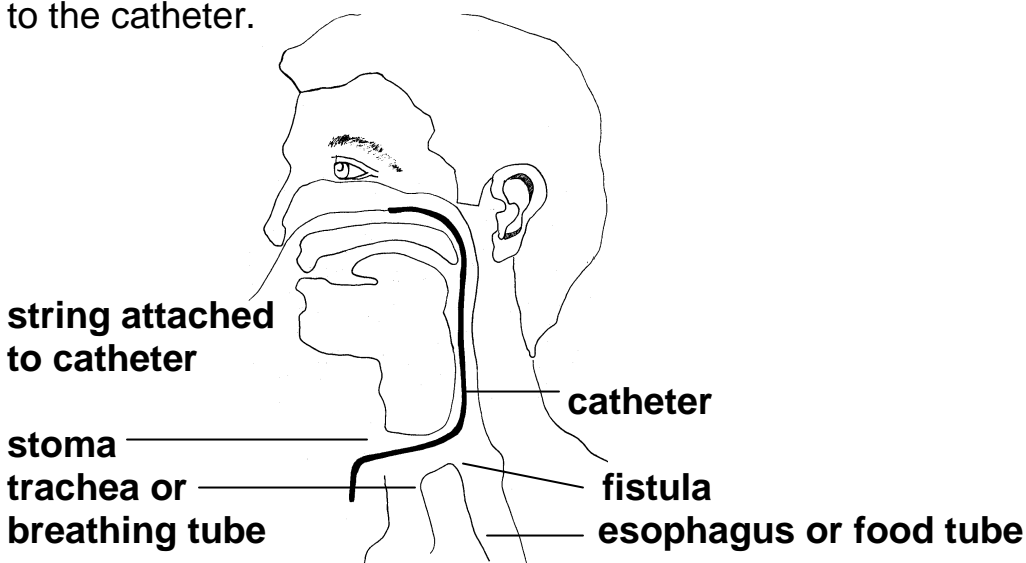
- A Primary TEF operation is done at the same time as the laryngectomy surgery.
- A Secondary TEF operation is done sometime after the laryngectomy surgery.

The operation is done under local or general anesthesia. Your Surgeon decides what is best for you.

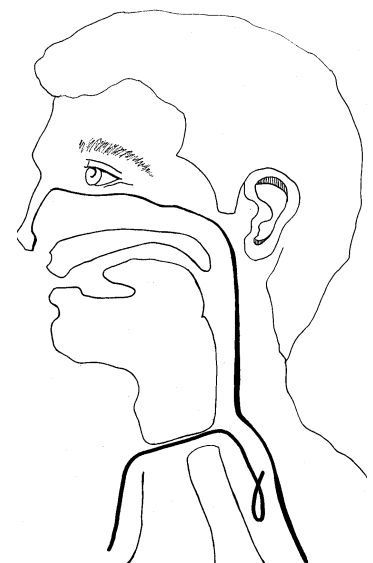
For both types, the Surgeon makes an opening through the wall of the trachea into the esophagus. This opening is called a fistula. A tube called a catheter is threaded through the fistula. This tube prevents the fistula from closing. The tube comes out of your nose or a hole in your neck called a stoma. This depends on the Surgeon's preference.

A feeding tube may come out of the stoma. This may be used instead of a catheter when the surgery is done as a primary procedure. This is to avoid having two tubes.

Here is a side view of the tube coming out of the nose. A thin string is attached to the catheter.



Here is a side view of the catheter coming out of a stoma in the neck.



How long is the surgery?

The surgery takes about 15 minutes to do. You go home the same day with the catheter in place when this is done as a secondary operation. The catheter is in place for about 2 weeks.

After the TEF Surgery

The catheter is usually sutured in place. If your catheter falls out, put it back in the fistula as soon as you can. Secure it well with tape and contact your surgeon.

Getting your voice prosthesis fitted

Your fitting for the first voice prosthesis is most often done in the Endoscopy Unit. There is a cost for the voice prosthesis. This is reviewed with you by the Speech-Language Pathologist during your appointment.

During your fitting appointment, the catheter is taken out. Then, your Surgeon and Speech-Language Pathologist decide the right size of voice prosthesis for you. It is common to have the size of the prosthesis changed several days or weeks after the first fitting, as the swelling in the surgical area goes down.

Voice Production

After you have a voice prosthesis, the Speech-Language Pathologist teaches you how to produce voice, clean the prosthesis, and troubleshoot problems that may occur. It may take several days or weeks for you to learn how to do this with ease.

The prosthesis does not produce your new voice. The sound is produced by the esophagus vibrating. You learn how to make sound by blocking your stoma with your finger, thumb or valve. The air then comes from your lungs through the prosthesis into your esophagus and mouth, and you are able to talk.

