

# 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**  
 Call Resuscitation Team  
**CPR if no pulse / signs of life**

**Yes**  
 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?**

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

**No**  
 Deflate the **cuff** (if present)  
**Look, listen & feel at the mouth and tracheostomy**  
 Use waveform capnography or Mapleson C if available

**Is the patient stable or improving?**

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

**No**

**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

**No**  
 Call Resuscitation team  
**CPR if no pulse / signs of life**

**Is the patient breathing?**

**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