Helpful Tips for
Self-inserting a Tracheostomy Tube
(LARYNGECTOMY PATIENTS ONLY)

Equipment:
- Tracheostomy sizing tool (if needed as a guide)
- Local anaesthetic spray (as prescribed)
- Water based Gel (as prescribed)
- Tracheostomy Tube*
- Neck Ties
- Syringe
- Paper Tissues

*As this is for training purposes only, it is recommended that a single use cuffed tracheostomy tube is used. The Portex Blue Line is a good cost effective option.

Remove your usual tube, button or baseplate and ensure your stoma is clean and dry.

1. Using the sizing tool, first assess the size of the stoma and choose the correct tube size.

2. If possible stand in front of a mirror. Remember the aim is to become comfortable and competent at self-inserting a tube.

3. It may be helpful to first apply a local anaesthetic spray (such as Xylocaine) directly into the stoma and then waiting a minute or so before attempting insertion. Using an anaesthetic spray will mean that the tube is better tolerated and will allow for a more positive experience whilst using the aquather device. The anaesthetic spray must be prescribed by a qualified practitioner.

4. Whilst waiting for the local anaesthetic to start working prepare the tube by inserting the obturator and attaching the neck tie on to the neck plate. At this point you can also check that the cuff of the tube is patent by inflating it with
air and checking that it does not deflate. Remove all air from the cuff prior to insertion. Now apply a very small amount of gel on to the cuff of the tube.

5. Hold the neck plate firmly in two hands so that the opening lumen (tip of the tube) is close to the stoma. Now take a deep breath in and hold (this will expand the windpipe) and slowly and smoothly insert the tube in to the windpipe following its natural direction.

6. Once in the windpipe you must IMMEDIATELY remove the obturator from the tube (it will not be possible to breath if the obturator is inside the tube).

7. It is likely that tube insertion will make you cough so ensure you support the tube by holding the neck plate against the neck. Once you have stopped coughing you can secure the neck ties.

8. A good seal is needed around the tube to prevent leakage of water in to your lungs. This is achieved by inflating the cuff on the tube. The maximum length of time you should have the cuff continuously inflated is 30 minutes. Start by inflating the pilot balloon slowly with approx. 8 mls of air using a syringe. Detach the syringe from the pilot balloon. To test for a good seal first take a deep breath and then place your finger over the end of your tube and exhale. You should not be able to breathe out and there should be no air escaping from around the cuff of the tube. If you do hear or feel a hiss of air escaping from around the cuff this means that more air needs putting in to the pilot balloon. Keep inserting air in increments of 1ml at a time until a complete seal is obtained. If you do have an immediate seal with your initial 8 mls of air, you may want to try and remove 1ml at a time until you obtain a complete seal using the minimum amount of air possible. Once you have found the minimum amount of air needed for a complete seal, add an extra 2 mls of air. This will ensure a good seal is maintained during head movement.

9. During your support session with your Clinical Nurse Specialist you may have access to a suction machine. We do not advise the use of a suction machine as you will not have access to one outside of the hospital setting. A good cough in to some tissues is usually sufficient. A saline spray can also help to thin your secretions making them easier to cough out of the tube and into
some tissues. Your Clinical Nurse Specialist can advise you on how to use a spray bottle or Mucosal Atomisation Devise (MAD). Spray bottles can be purchased from your local pharmacy or are available free of charge if you are registered with Countrywide Supplies.

10. **The cuff of the tube must always be deflated before you remove the tube from your windpipe.** Remove all the air from the cuff using a 10ml syringe. Then unfasten the neck ties and again take a deep breath and hold to expand your windpipe whilst you remove the tube gently from your windpipe.

11. Wash your tube thoroughly with mild soap and water and allow it to fully air dry before storing it in a dry sealed container.

12. You may find that you have a very sensitive cough at first and that you find it uncomfortable wearing a tube. The more you practice the more comfortable you will begin to feel and the less sensitive your cough will be.