

Dysphagia Support Procedures

Appendix 2: Procedure for Suctioning of the Oral (Mouth) Cavity

This procedure has been developed to ensure **participants** requiring support for their breathing and/or oral hygiene is carried out safely, effectively and competently and correct methods and equipment are used by support workers.

Purpose

The purpose of oral suctioning is to:

- maintain the **participant's** airway and improve oxygenation by removing mucous secretions (excess saliva) and foreign material (vomit or gastric secretions) from the mouth and throat (oropharynx), and
- maintain oral / mouth hygiene for **participants** who have an impaired cough reflex or impaired swallowing and are unable to remove secretions or foreign matter by effective coughing.

Signs and Symptoms for Oral Suctioning

- Obvious excessive secretions in the oral cavity (mouth)
- Weak, ineffective cough
- Drooling
- Gastric secretions or vomit in the mouth
- Gurgling sounds with inspiration (breathing in) and expiration (breathing out)

Risks

- Pooling of secretions may lead to obstruction of the upper airway, impaired breathing, preventing oxygen from getting in and carbon dioxide from getting out.
- Aspiration (secretions getting into the lungs which can cause infection resulting in pneumonia).
- Hypoxia due to decrease in oxygen levels.
- Trauma to oral mucosa if Yankauer is not kept moving during suctioning. Suction episode not to exceed 10-15 seconds. **Participant** must rest in between for 30 seconds to 1 minute to prevent hypoxia. Replace oxygen.

To minimise risks of undertaking the procedure, complete on-going training and education on how to follow operating instructions and troubleshooting on any appliance used.

Equipment Required

- Suction machine or suction connection
- Connection tubing
- Non-sterile gloves
- Yankauer
- Water

- Sterile basin
- Mask and clean towel

Procedure

1. Assess **participant's** need for suctioning e.g., signs of hypoxia, risk of aspiration, unable to clear secretions, mouth hygiene.
2. Explain to **participant** how the procedure will help clear out secretions and will only last a few seconds to allay fear and anxiety and increase cooperation with the procedure.
3. Encourage **participant** to cough if appropriate or able.
4. Ensure **participant** is in semi-recumbent position with head turned to the side as it facilitates ease of suctioning (if unconscious should be in the lateral position).
5. Ensure **participants** privacy and dignity at all times.
6. Perform hand hygiene, gather supplies, and put on non-sterile gloves. Wear mask if fluid splash is likely to occur.
7. Fill basin with water to clear connection tubing in between suctionings at least three times.
8. Connect the yankauer to the suction machine.
9. Turn on the suction to the required level and test function by covering hole on the yankauer with your thumb and suctioning up a small amount of water. Suction levels for adults are 100 -150 mmHg on wall suction and 10 - 15 mmHg on portable suction units (Refer to participant's prescribed suction levels).
10. Remove **participant's** oxygen mask if present. Nasal prong maybe left in place. Always be prepared to replace the oxygen if **participant** becomes short of breath.
11. Place towel on **participant's** chest to prevent secretions coming in contact with the **participant**.
12. Insert yankauer catheter along the gum line to the pharynx in a circular motion, keeping yankauer moving as movement prevents the catheter from suctioning to the oral mucosa and causing trauma to the tissues.
13. Encourage **participant** to cough if they can as coughing helps move the secretions from the lower airways to the upper airways.
14. Apply suction for a maximum of 10-15 seconds and allow **participant** to rest between suction for 30 seconds to 1 minute. Avoid stimulating the gag reflex.
15. Where required, replace oxygen on **participant** to prevent / minimize hypoxia and clear out suction catheter by placing yankauer in the basin of water to prevent the tubing from plugging.

16. Re-assess and repeat oral suctioning, if required.
17. Compare pre and post suction assessment to determine if suctioning was effective.
18. Ensure **participant** is in a comfortable position after intervention.
19. Clean up supplies, wash hands and document response to suctioning for clear communication among the **participant's** health care team.

Document Control

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