Functional Consequences after Laryngectomy and Emergency Care

What is changed after laryngectomy?

- Breathing: through the tracheostoma, lung air does not pass through the mouth or nose
- Eating: food and liquid go directly from mouth to esophagus, can’t aspirate (assuming proper healing)
- Speaking: absence of vocal cords requires a new sound source
Functional consequences of not breathing through the nose

- Sneezing
- Nose blowing
- Smelling

Safety issues

- Toxic fumes
- Smoke
- Gas leaks
- Spoiled food

![Mom, come see the kittens!](image)

Functional consequences of not breathing through the mouth

- Blowing balloons, candles, matches and bubbles
- Cooling hot soup and coffee
- Laughing
- Yawning
- Whistling
- Playing wind instruments
- Using inhaled medications
- Pulmonary function tests
Functional consequences of breathing through a tracheostoma

Showering
Swimming, water sports
Foreign bodies in the stoma
Lifting heavy objects
Natural childbirth

Anesthesia delivery
Oxygen delivery
Basic Life Support (CPR)

Myths about Laryngectomies

1. Can't swim
2. Can't smell
3. Can't lift heavy objects
4. Can't sing
5. Can't blow one's nose
6. Can't whistle
7. Can't blow out a candle, blow on coffee or soup, blow bubbles or balloons
8. Can't do pulmonary function tests
9. Can't use medication inhalers
10. Can't play a wind instrument
11. Can't give birth naturally
12. Can't smell??

The Nipple Tube
A Simple Device for Olfaction and Nose Blowing after Laryngectomy

Can't smell??

Nasal Airflow Inducing Maneuver aka 'Polite Yawn'
Keep your lips closed while you lower your jaw, tongue, base of tongue, soft palate. This creates negative pressure in the mouth and air will flow into the nose.


https://doi.org/10.1044/jshd.4901.106b
Medication Delivery and Pulmonary Function Tests

Use a pediatric face mask or an adapter with adhesive baseplate.

Can't whistle???

Can't lift heavy objects???

“...In 1982 he... was diagnosed with advanced cancer of the throat and underwent a laryngectomy... He still bench-presses 285 lbs. and rides his Harley FXRT every day.”

Reprinted From www.bikerworld.co.uk/Barger
Can't swim?  (This is not recommended)

Play a wind instrument???

Bill plays the harmonica

Can't sing???

Shout at Cancer

Tony
Natural childbirth???

Jewell

- Laryngectomy at age 22 (~40 years ago)
- Took Lamaze classes
- 2 natural childbirths

Neck breathers are at risk....

...for potentially-fatal medical errors every time they undergo a procedure that involves the airway.

Medical professionals aren't always aware of the laryngectomee's unique airway requirements, and consequently, do not respond appropriately.


Basic Life Support - AHA 2017 guidelines

http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/137/1/e7
Mouth to stoma resuscitation

LaryVox SOS Safe-Mask by Fahl
(Boston Medical Products)

To prevent medical errors....

- Medic alert bracelets
- Emergency cards, tattoos, etc
- Contact the local rescue squad
- Notify 911 call center
- Bring a friend to all medical encounters
- Red flag in the Electronic Medical Record
- Training & education

“My nose is just an ornament!”

Quote from a laryngectomee
Further Reading

- Doyle and Keith (ed.). Contemporary Considerations in the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Head and Neck Cancer
- Doyle (ed.). Clinical Care and Rehabilitation in Head and Neck Cancer. Springer, 2019

Further Reading

Brook, Itzhak. The Laryngectomee Guide. Self-published, available from Amazon.com
Keith and Thomas. The Handbook for the Laryngectomee. Pre-Ed. 1994 available from Bruce Medical, Boston, MA
Medical Affairs Committee. Rescue Breathing for Laryngectomees. International Association of Laryngectomees (IAL) Atlanta, GA

Further Reading

Childs, Palmer, Fried-Oken, Graville. The Use of Technology for Phone and Face-to-Face Communication After Total Laryngectomy. American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology • Vol. 26 • 99–112 • February 2017
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