

SAFE ORAL SUCTIONING IN ADULTS WITH A NEURO-DISABILITY



Key points

- Oral suctioning is important to remove secretions from the mouth.
- Individuals who may benefit from oral suctioning include those with a poor swallow or those who produce more saliva than usual.
- Using a safe technique when providing oral suctioning is important to prevent damage to the teeth.



Why is oral suctioning important for patients with a neuro-disability?

Many people with a neuro-disability may be unable to clear secretions from their mouth, this may cause obstruction or discomfort. Oral suctioning is performed to remove the secretions from the oral cavity. Frequency of oral suctioning will vary according to the clinical need of the individual. Oral suctioning (suctioning from the mouth) is different from deep suctioning where secretions are removed beyond the mouth from the airways by staff who are trained to do so.

Indications for oral suctioning

- Visible secretions or debris in the mouth
- As part of mouth care for people with a poor swallow
- Excessive saliva production
- Gurgling sounds during inspiration and expiration which may indicate pooling of secretions



What are the risks with oral suctioning in patients with a neuro-disability?

When providing oral suctioning, care should be taken to ensure the correct technique is used. If incorrectly done, suctioning can cause damage to the inside of the mouth (cheeks, tongue, lips) or teeth. Some people with a neuro-disability have a strong tendency to bite down and may inadvertently clamp down onto the suction tube during suctioning. If the suction tube is pulled while the person is biting down hard onto it there may be damage to the teeth which can make them loose. If an individual does bite down on the suction tube hold on to the end but do not pull it and wait for the patient to relax. Normally they will open their mouth and the tube can be removed. A side-effect of oral suctioning can be stimulation of a person's gag reflex. Sensitive areas tend to be towards the back on the roof of the mouth and next to the tongue at the back of the mouth, care should be taken to avoid stimulating these sensitive areas.



What equipment do you need?

- Yankauer suction
- Light source
- Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Safe oral suctioning technique

Only carry out oral suction if you are trained to do so

1. Prepare equipment, ensure unit is charged if using via battery.
2. Set to required pressure – usually up to 115mmHg for adults, 100mmHG for children.
3. Explain the procedure to the individual and obtain consent if possible from the person to carry on.
4. Position individual correctly – where possible ensure in upright position.
5. Ensure good lighting is available, use of a pen torch may be required.
6. Wash hands and put on PPE.
7. Check suction pressure by placing thumb over the end of the tubing.
8. Insert Yankauer gently into the mouth until it reaches the inside pouch of the cheek, (some suction units require you to place your finger over a hole) and apply suction.
9. Use suction for a short amount of time – no longer than 10 seconds.
10. Remain in the oral cavity where Yankauer is visible, do not suction beyond the tonsils.
11. During suctioning keep a close eye on the person's facial expression and stop at any signs of distress.
12. Repeat as necessary, turn off the suction when finished.
13. The Yankauer and tubing is single use so should be disposed of after a single procedure.
14. Remove gloves and wash hands.
15. Document that you have carried out the procedure in nursing notes.



Do not pull if a person bites on the end of the tube, wait for them to release



Wall mounted suction unit



Portable suction unit



Yankauer tube