Emergency tracheostomy management flowchart

Emergency Tracheostomy Management – Patent Upper Airway

Initiate MET call unless airway expertise available
Look, listen and feel at the mouth and tracheostomy
Use waveform capnography when available: exhaled carbon dioxide indicates a patent or partially patent airway

Is the patient breathing?

No

Initiate MET call
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 reinserting 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 and feel at the mouth and tracheostomy
Use waveform capnography if available

Is the patient stable or improving?

Yes

Tracheostomy tube partially obstructed or displaced
Continue ABCDE assessment

No

REMOVE THE TRACHEOSTOMY TUBE
Ensure oxygen applied to face and stoma
Use waveform capnography
Consider reinsertion of tracheostomy tube if appropriate airway expertise available
Look, listen and feel at the mouth and tracheostomy

CPR if no pulse/signs of life

No

Is the patient breathing?

Yes

Continue ABCDE assessment

Primary emergency oxygenation

Standard ORAL airway manoeuvres
Cover the stoma (swabs/hands). Use:
• Bag-valve mask
• Oral or nasal airway adjuncts
• Supraglottic airway device e.g. LMA

Tracheostomy STOMA ventilation
LMA applied to stoma

Secondary emergency oxygenation

Attempt UKAL 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 fibre optic 'scope/Bougie/airway exchange catheter

* This is not a comprehensive guide to tracheostomy management and does not overrule expert opinion.

Adapted from National Tracheostomy Safety Project (NTSP) 2013

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