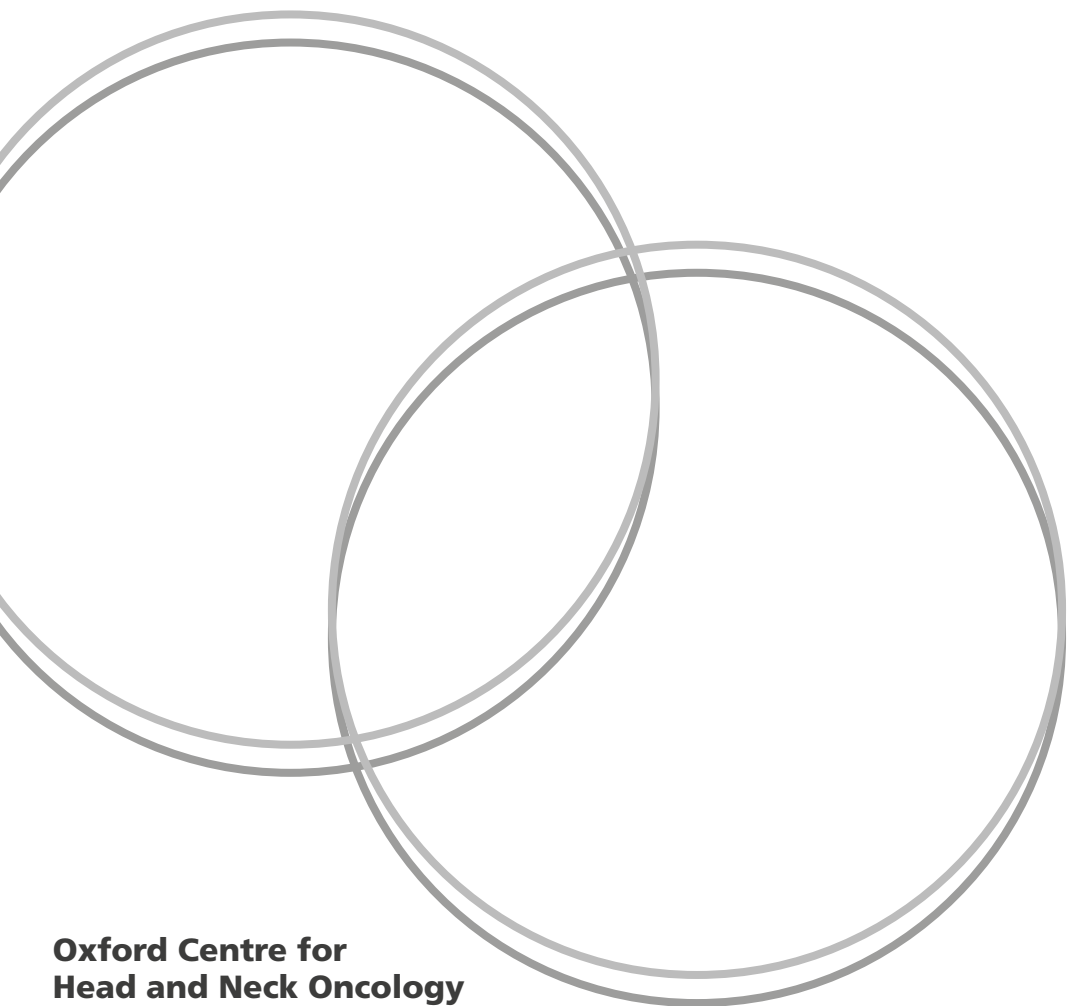




Oxford University Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Tracheo-Oesophageal Speech Valve – Your New Voice

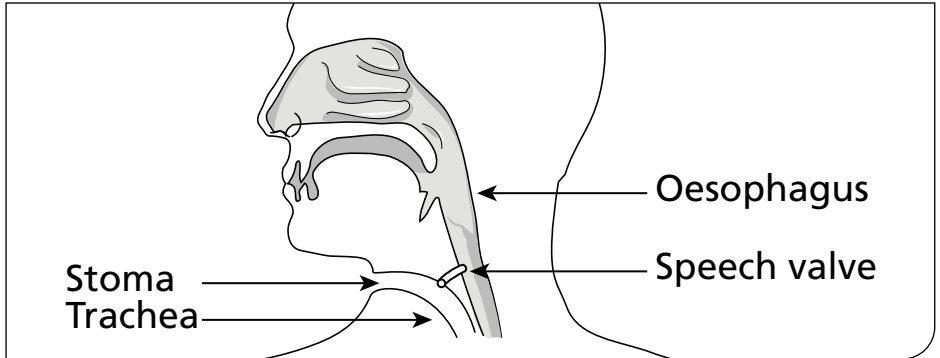
Information for patients



Oxford Centre for  
Head and Neck Oncology



You now have a speech valve that you can use to make a 'voice'. The valve works by allowing air to pass from your windpipe (trachea) into your swallowing tube (oesophagus). The air vibrates in the oesophagus, creating the sound of your new 'voice'.



## How do I make my new voice?

To make your voice you need to cover the breathing opening (stoma) in your neck, either with a finger or thumb, or if you are using a heat moisture exchanger (HME), press the filter cassette in to re-direct the air as you breathe out.

The pattern for 'voicing' is:

- Breathe in.
- Cover stoma or press filter cassette to re-direct air.
- Breathe out and talk.
- Uncover to allow next breath in.
- Cover again, breathe out and talk.

Try to keep relaxed, covering your stoma with firm, but not hard pressure. If you are using your finger or thumb, cover the stoma as if you are covering the top of a bottle. You should not need a lot of pressure to get a voice.

Keep practicing – the more you use your new voice the easier it should become.

## **How do I look after the speech valve?**

Your chest produces mucus that needs cleaning away from your valve, so that the air can continue to pass through. You will have been given a small brush for cleaning the valve.

Gently place the brush in the opening of the valve and twist in one direction pulling out any mucus. You may need to do this three to four times a day. Careful cleaning of the valve will give you the clearest voice and reduce leakage problems (see next section).

Treat your cleaning brush like a toothbrush. Wash it well after you have used it, then allow it to dry in an upright position. Replace it regularly (after 1 to 2 weeks) or when it begins to look worn.

New voice prosthesis brushes are available on prescription through your GP. Your Speech and Language Therapist can tell you which brush you need to use.

## **When does the valve need changing?**

The valve needs changing if you cough immediately after drinking; if you see fluids leaking through the valve; or if your stoma cover (bib) or filter cassettes (HME) are stained with what you have drunk. If you have one, use a "plug" to block the valve, so that you can eat and drink safely until the valve is changed.

If you don't have a plug or are unable to put the plug in, thicken your drinks using thickening powder or opt for naturally thick fluids i.e. fruit smoothies or milkshakes. Thicker drinks are less likely to leak through your valve. You can get thickening powder on prescription from your GP. It can also be helpful to take small sips when drinking, to reduce the amount of liquid leaking through the valve.

## Contact us when the valve needs changing

Telephone the Speech and Language Therapy Department on:  
**01865 231 205.**

Please call before coming to make sure a therapist is available to see you. If we are unable to take your call please leave a message and we will phone you back as soon as we can.

Valve replacement is carried out by the Speech and Language Therapists in the Blenheim Head and Neck Unit, Churchill Hospital, Old Road, Headington, Oxford, OX3 7LJ.

We are available Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm.

If you require an emergency valve change out of hours you will need to attend the A&E Department to be seen by an ENT Specialist.

## **How to contact us if you need further information**

If you have any questions or concerns, or need any further information, then please contact:

### **Oxford Speech and Language Therapy Department**

Telephone: **01865 231 205**

(Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm, answerphone available)

### **Head and Neck Cancer Specialist Nurses**

Telephone: **01865 234 346**

(Monday to Friday, 8.00am to 4.00pm)



## Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Authors: Compiled with the help from the Head & Neck Oncology Team & users  
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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
[www.ouh.nhs.uk/information](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/information)



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