University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust

Head and Neck Cancer Speech and Language Therapy

Laryngectomy surgical voice restoration - cleaning your valve

Cleaning your valve

The following advice will help you clean your valve on your own. You can include this part of your stoma care routine and do it as often as needed.

We recommend cleaning the valve at least once a day to stop it from becoming blocked. You may need to clean it more often if you have extra mucus or an infection. Blockages can make the valve leak or cause you to lose your voice.

When you are in hospital, a member of staff will show you how to do this. You can use this checklist as a reminder when you are at home.

You will need:

- Mirror
- Good light source
- Cleaning brush
- Cup of water to rinse the brush
- Drink
- Kitchen towel

Always wash your hands well with soap and water before cleaning your valve.

To clean the valve

- Make sure you have a clear view of the valve. Adjust the light or mirror if needed.
- Gently place the brush into the circular centre opening of the valve.
- Once in place, turn the brush gently between your fingers.
- Turn the brush a few times, then carefully remove it.
- Rinse the brush in the cup of water.
- Check the brush is clean, then repeat as needed.
- Continue cleaning until the brush comes out clean.
- Try to speak to check the valve is working and have a drink to make sure it is not leaking.
- If thick mucus or debris is hard to remove from the front of the valve, moisten some gauze, wrap it tightly around your finger, and gently clean the area. Repeat until the debris is gone.
- Your valve may move or spin while you are cleaning it. This is normal and nothing to worry about.

Sterilising the valve brush

Wash the brush thoroughly with warm water. Partly dry it with kitchen towel, then leave it to air dry.

If you have been told that you have thrush on the back of your valve, your GP can give you the right treatment. Throw away your brush after each use to avoid re-introducing the infection.

Put the medicine onto the brush using the pipette provided. Do not dip the brush into the bottle.

Once the thrush has cleared, you can go back to washing your brush as above.

If you need more information, please speak to your speech and language therapist or clinical nurse specialist (CNS).

Other tips:

- Stay hydrated. Dry mucus is harder to clear and can block the valve.
- Avoid using harsh chemicals, alcohol, or peroxide cleaning products, as these can damage the valve.

If you have any concerns or questions, please contact the Head and Neck Team Speech and Language therapists or Clinical Nurse Specialists on 024 7696 6449 or 024 7696 6452.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6449 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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