Oral Suctioning

GENERAL INFORMATION

The purpose of oral suctioning is to remove secretions (mucus, thick saliva, excess saliva) from the patient’s mouth and upper airway. Suctioning is needed when the patient is unable to cough up the secretions, when he or she is drooling and is restless.

GUIDELINES

1. Wash your hands. Handwashing is the single most important factor in controlling the spread of infection.
2. Gather your equipment. You need
   • A suction machine,
   • A connecting tube,
   • A suction catheter with a control device,
   • Two nonsterile gloves,
   • A clean basin filled with tap water,
   • Two clean towels,
   • A clean 4×4 gauze pad,
   • A rubber band.
3. Help the patient into a comfortable sitting position, with the head and neck well supported. Turn the patient’s head toward you. If the patient is unconscious, place him or her in a side-lying position, facing you.
4. Put a clean towel under the patient’s chin.
5. Attach the connecting tube to the suction machine.
6. Turn on the suction machine.
7. Put on the gloves.
8. Attach the suction catheter to the connecting tube.
9. Put the tip of the suction catheter into the tap water and apply suction. This wets the suction catheter and lets you make sure the suction is working.
10. Take the suction catheter out of the water and release the suction.
11. Put the suction catheter into the patient’s mouth, advancing it gently along one side to the back of the mouth. Do not apply suction while inserting the catheter.
12. The patient may cough while the catheter is being inserted. This is normal. Continue to insert the catheter to the back of the patient’s mouth.
13. Apply suction and gently roll the catheter between your fingers as you withdraw it.
14. Suction for no more than 15 seconds. If the patient begins to make a crowing sound, stop suctioning, give the patient oxygen, and call the ambulance right away.
15. Put the catheter tip into the water and apply suction. This flushes the catheter.
16. Take the suction catheter out of the water and release the suction.
17. Repeat steps 11 to 16 until the patient’s mouth is free of excess secretions or the patient is coughing out the excess secretions.
18. Put fresh tap water into the basin. Thoroughly flush the suction catheter and the connecting tube.
19. Turn off the suction machine.
20. Detach the suction catheter from the connecting tube. Cover the end of the connecting tube with a clean gauze pad, secure it with a rubber band, and hang it on the suction machine, with the tip pointing up.
21. Rinse the suction catheter with running tap water.
22. Dry the catheter and store it in a clean towel until its next use.
23. Wash the basin with warm water and soap. Dry it and put it away.
24. Remove your gloves and throw them away.
25. Help the patient into a comfortable position.
26. Wash your hands.

CARE OF SUCTIONING

EQUIPMENT

1. Keep enough supplies on hand and ready for use.
2. Throw away collection canisters, connecting tubes, and suction catheters that are hard or cracked.
3. Attach a clean connecting tube to the suction machine as needed.
4. Empty the collection canister once a day.
5. Disinfect reusable equipment (collection canister, connecting tubes, suction catheters, basins) at least once a week.
   a. Thoroughly wash the equipment in warm soapy water. Rinse completely.
   b. Boil the equipment in tap water for 15 minutes.
   c. Let the equipment cool.
   d. Dry the equipment with clean towels.
   e. Store the equipment in clean plastic bags, fresh jars, or freshly laundered towels.
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CALL THE NURSE

If any of the following happen, call the nurse or doctor:

1. The patient has a fever over 101°F.
2. The color of the secretions changes.
3. The secretions smell bad.
4. The patient has an increase in the amount of secretions, or the suctioning does not seem to be removing enough of the secretions.

OTHER INSTRUCTIONS