

Caring for a loved one after laryngectomy surgery can be stressful and overwhelming. Taking steps to prepare may help you and your loved one feel more at ease when you come home from the hospital.

These suggestions and tips can be helpful for you and other family members to prepare for life after laryngectomy surgery.

NEW ANATOMY

After a laryngectomy, your loved one breathes through a stoma in their neck instead of their nose or mouth. This change means they'll learn new ways to communicate and take care of their breathing and the skin around their stoma.

► **VISIT laryngectomy.info** for valuable information, guidance, and to learn from others. **SCAN HERE ►**

See "Support for the supporters" section



BEFORE SURGERY

- **ESTABLISH** who will order laryngectomy supplies. Can be a spouse, child, or the patient. Supplies can be ordered via telephone or email based on preference.
- **RECORD** your loved one's voice.
- **SET UP** "in case of emergency" (ICE) contact information on your loved one's smartphone.
- **FIND** a way to communicate before coming home from the hospital, such as:
 - gestures
 - smartphone app
 - lip reading
 - writing/LCD eWriter
- **REFER** to the Living Well book for additional information.

PREPARING FOR AN EMERGENCY

- **CONTACT** your local emergency medical service (EMS) and/or fire department. Inform them that a laryngectomee is a **TOTAL NECK BREATHER and:**
 - They **ONLY** breathe through an opening in their neck called a stoma.
 - Their voice box was removed and they may have trouble speaking.
 - If needed, oxygen and/or resuscitation can only be provided through the stoma – **NOT THROUGH THE MOUTH AND NOSE!**

Yellow Dot Program: Ask your local EMS if they participate in this free program that helps provide medical information to first responders during a traffic emergency.

- **CREATE** a code system on the phone for emergencies so if your loved one calls and needs help, but can't speak you can send help ("press button twice" for help, etc.).
- **FAMILIARIZE** yourself with rescue breathing resources.

CAUTION: After laryngectomy, water can enter your stoma and cause serious injury or drowning – avoid activities like swimming or boating.



SUPPLIES

- **GATHER** these additional items your loved one may need upon discharge:
 - ☐ Dry-erase board, LCD eWriter, pad of paper
 - ☐ Saline
 - ☐ Compact mirror
 - ☐ Flashlight
 - ☐ Water-based lubricant

ORDERING LARYNGECTOMY SUPPLIES

- **CALL** Atos Medical and set up an account for ordering the supplies recommended by your clinician/physician ahead of time. This will make the shipping process faster when you are ready to order, and minimize the risk of delays.
- **UPON DISCHARGE** plan to order a Provox Life Shower stoma cover (if one was not provided by the hospital). It protects the stoma from water while showering. It covers the stoma by attaching to a Provox Life LaryTube or adhesive.

COMMUNICATION

► **BE PATIENT.** If an Electrolarynx (EL) is being used, it can take time and practice to use to it well. It will also take practice for you to understand the EL user. Some things that can help you practice together are:

- Pick a category (days of the week, months, colors, animals, places, etc.). Have your loved one say an item in the category using the electrolarynx, then, try to guess what he/she said.
- Practice this until you can understand about 75-80% of what he/she said.

► **ENCOURAGE** your loved one to practice the EL as much as possible.

► **REFER TO** the CareTip Electrolarynx Quick Start Guide for more training tips on using the EL.



SCAN HERE ►

www.atosmedical.us/resources/caretips

► **DOWNLOAD** these apps to your loved one's smartphone or tablet. These apps and others like them speak what is typed and are available for various platforms (Apple/Android):

- GoTalk Now
- Predictable
- Speech Assistant AAC

► **JOIN US** at our monthly virtual EL Events to learn helpful tips and tricks to get the most out of your device.



SCAN HERE ►

www.atosmedical.us/resources/mylife-events



RESOURCES

► **SCAN HERE** or visit www.atosmedical.us to learn more about and request the following free resources:



www.atosmedical.us/resources/emergency-resources

- Neck Breather Alert Bracelet.
- Emergency Rescue Breathing Card.
- Medical Alert Window Cling – hang on the front and back doors of your home and in your car(s).
- Click MyLife Events in the left menu for local events including virtual EL Knowledge Events.

► RESCUE BREATHING RESOURCES

- Download "Rescue Breathing for Laryngectomees and Other Neck Breathers" by Dr. Itzhak Brook, MD, MSc.
- Educational Video: Rescue Breathing for Laryngectomees.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Complimentary services from Atos Medical include: insurance/reimbursement team, case management team, and bilingual support.

SUPPORT

► **ASK** your loved one's speech pathologist, nurse, or physician if there is a support group in your area. Atos Medical offers many local community events, Thriving After Laryngectomy events, and other support events for patients and caregivers. Also consider finding a virtual community via Facebook, webwhispers.org, or Lary's Speakeasy (larysspeakeasy.org).

There is support out there, and you and your loved one are not alone!

► **WATCH** our caregiver story about one couple's laryngectomy journey.



SCAN HERE ►

www.atosmedical.us/videos/caregiver-story-with-obie-and-josie

INSURANCE

IMPORTANT TIP: Add yourself or another caregiver (spouse, friend, family) as an authorized contact so you are able to communicate on your loved one's behalf.

► **CALL** your loved one's medical insurance company to ask the following questions:

- What are your durable medical equipment (DME) benefits?
- Who are the approved DME providers in your area? These are suppliers that can bill your insurance for medical supplies like heat and moisture exchangers (HMEs), saline solution, suction catheters, and adhesives/ attachments.
- Will they cover medical supplies from out-of-network DME companies?