

## How You Can Help a Loved One Before and After a Laryngectomy

1. Before the surgery, record your loved one's voice.
2. Contact your local Emergency Medical Service (EMS) and/or Fire Department. Inform them that a laryngectomee is a total neck breather **and**:
  - He/She ONLY breathes through an opening in their neck called a stoma. They are a Total Neck Breather.
  - Their Voice Box was removed, and they may have trouble speaking.
  - If oxygen and/or resuscitation are needed, it can only be provided through the stoma. NOT THROUGH THE MOUTH AND NOSE!
  - Communicate any other important medical information.
  - Also see list of resources on the bottom of page two of this sheet
3. Find a way to communicate before coming back home from the hospital, such as:
  - gestures
  - speech menu
  - artificial larynx (AL)
  - lip reading
  - writing
4. If an AL is being used, be patient. It takes time and training from both of you to understand one another. Some things that you can do to help train your ear are the following:
  - Pick a category (days of the week, months, colors, animals, places, etc.), and have your significant other say an item in the category using the artificial larynx. Then, you try and guess what he/she said.
  - Practice this until you can understand about 75-80% of what he/she said.
  - Encourage your significant other to use the AL as much as possible.
  - See "Topic 9: Artificial Larynx Basic Training" CareTips sheet for more training tips on using the AL.
5. If your significant other uses a smartphone, tablet, PC and/or laptop computer, the following programs speak what you type:
  - Speak It! Text to Speech
  - Verbally for iPad
  - Go Talk Now for iPad
  - Predictable
6. Set up your In Case of Emergency (ICE) contact information on your loved one's cellphone.

7. Purchase a medical alert bracelet with “Total Neck Breather” engraved on it. You can also include other important medical information (for example: high blood pressure, diabetes). Carry a medical alert card on your person. Atos Medical offers complimentary alert bracelets and emergency cards upon request.
8. Call your 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 baseplates.
  - Will they cover medical supplies from out of network DME companies?
9. If your clinician and/or physician tells you that you will need to order special supplies after your surgery, call the supplier and set up an account ahead of time. This will make the shipping process faster when you are ready to order.
10. While showering, a Provox® ShowerAid should be worn to prevent water from going into the stoma.
11. Have your clinician, nurse and/or physician tell you if there is a local support group in your area. These groups can be very helpful as they typically have guest speakers talk about various topics that can help your and your loved one’s quality of life. Atos Medical offers many local Community Events and other support events for patients and caregivers.

## Supplies You May Need Upon Discharge\*

- Dry Erase Board or Pad of Paper
- Provox® ShowerAid
- Lint Free Facial Tissues and/or 4x4 gauze pads
- Saline
- Aquaphor® Healing Ointment for dry, irritated skin
- Long handled cotton swabs
- Compact Mirror
- Flashlight
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\* Consult your Physician, Nurse and/or Clinician for additional supplies

## Atos Resources

- Alert bracelet
- Emergency card
- Atos Website
- Insurance/Reimbursement Team
- Support and educational events

At **atosmedical.us**, you can find patient resources and links in the “Laryngectomy” section of the website. See “Patient Resources” in the menu on the left.