mnda
motor neurone disease
association

MND Professionals' Community of Practice

Oral suction for motor neurone disease

Motor neurone disease (MND) is a progressive and terminal disease that attacks the motor neurones, or motor nerves, in the brain and spinal cord. Over time, this leads to weakness and wasting of muscles causing increasing loss of mobility in the limbs, and difficulties with speech, swallowing and breathing.

Many people with MND experience problems with saliva and swallowing, making eating and drinking difficult. This can lead to increased risk of respiratory infections. People with MND may feel anxious about choking on saliva, food, drink and medications.

Information to share

We have two relevant information sheets for people affected by MND:
7A – *Swallowing difficulties*
7B – *Tube feeding*

Further information for you

P3 - *Managing saliva problems in MND*
P8 - *Managing dysphagia in MND*

Download at **www.mndassociation.org/publications** or contact MND Connect. Call 0808 802 6262 or email **mndconnect@mndassociation.org**

A build-up of secretions may lead to an increased risk of:

- discomfort
- the airway becoming blocked
- aspiration
- embarrassment due to saliva leaking from the mouth.

Oral suction can help to remove saliva, mucus or food particles in the mouth. This procedure involves inserting a Yankauer suction catheter into the mouth to remove saliva or mucus. This may be needed if a person with motor neurone disease (MND) is unable to clear secretions themselves, due to impaired swallowing reflex, impaired tongue or mouth movements and/or weak cough.

A person with MND may use this equipment themselves if they have the strength in their upper limbs and the required manual dexterity. If they are not able to do so, they will need support from a suitably trained family carer or care worker.

The person with MND, carers and family should be trained to carry out oral suction by the professional who supplies the equipment. This may be a respiratory physiotherapist or nurse, or a member of the MND specialist team.

Consent

If you intend using a suction machine with a person with MND, do not begin until you have their permission to do so. This may be sought using their preferred communication method.

The person's specialist team will advise whether suctioning is appropriate in cases where the person is unable to consent, but not carrying out the procedure would damage their health. A best interests decision in line with the Mental Capacity Act is needed if the person does not have the capacity to make the decision, unless it is an emergency situation. It is essential to check whether a person has recorded an Advance Decision to Refuse Treatment (ADRT) or emergency healthcare plan and what treatments or interventions have been included.

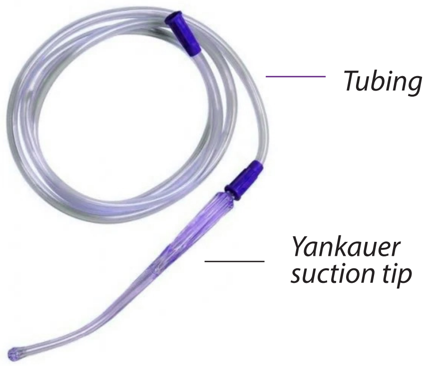
Cautions

Oral suction should not be performed where there are:

- facial fractures
- loose teeth
- clotting disorders
- laryngeal/oral carcinoma
- severe bronchospasm
- stridor
- restlessness/anxiety.

Equipment needed

- suction unit - ensure service due date has not passed
- filters/tubing, within expiry date
- Yankauer suction tip, within expiry date
- jug of cold water
- any personal protective equipment (eg gloves, goggles, apron)
- cleaning products (as specified in the manufacturer's guidance).



Oral suction procedure

- Seek advice from the professional who has provided the equipment if needed.
- Follow any procedures to avoid increasing the risk of infection.
- An oral suction unit should only be used for suction from the mouth (oral cavity).
- Do not put the Yankauer suction tip to the back of the person's throat, or further into the mouth than you can see.
- Do not pass the Yankauer suction tip past the person's back teeth, to avoid stimulating gag or airway reflexes.
- Do not try to remove solid objects, food or an inhaled foreign body from the back of the mouth or throat. This could force the object further into the airway and cause an obstruction.
- Do not lay the person flat on their back. The respiratory physiotherapist or nurse can advise on positioning, but if the person cannot sit up, they should lie on their side.
- Don't turn the vacuum dial too high. Start off on a low setting and increase slowly, and only as required for the person's needs. During your training, the appropriate professional will advise you on the setting to use.
- Do not perform suctioning in the mouth for longer than 10 seconds at a time.

- Try to avoid bringing the Yankauer suction tip into contact with the soft tissue on the inside of the mouth, to avoid damage.
- If the person with MND is using continuous non-invasive or tracheostomy ventilation, the respiratory team should advise on suctioning procedures.

Maintaining the equipment

- Suction a small amount of cold, clean water before and after each use. The Yankauer suction tip and tubing should be within expiry date and kept as clean as possible to prevent any build-up of bacteria that could lead to chest infections.
- Empty the canister regularly.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning the equipment after use.
- The suction unit battery should be regularly charged as instructed.

Obtaining an oral suction unit

Suction units may be available via the person's GP, district nurse or community equipment services. In some areas, suction units are only available through the local MND care centre or network, or through the home ventilation service if the person uses non-invasive ventilation (NIV).

If statutory provision has been explored and is not available, it may be possible to have a suction unit on loan from the MND Association. Ask the GP or district nurse to contact our Support Services team (see *Support grants and equipment loan* on the next page, or speak to your local MND care centre or network. If a suction unit is loaned from the MND Association, the local health authority or health and social care trust will need to make a small contribution towards carriage, maintenance and cleaning.

If the person with MND is at home, tubing and catheters should be available from the GP on prescription, or via the district nurse.

References

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Acknowledgements

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How we can support you and your team

MND Connect

Our helpline offers help, information and support, and signposting to people living with MND, carers, family and health and social care professionals.

Email: mndconnect@mndassociation.org
Phone: 0808 802 6262

Information resources

We produce high quality information resources for people living with MND, carers, family members and health and social care professionals.

www.mndassociation.org/publications

MND Association website

We have a wide range of information to support health and social care professionals working with people affected by MND.

www.mndassociation.org/professionals

Education

Our education programme is designed to improve standards of care and quality of life for people living with and affected by MND. Opportunities include online modules and face-to-face training.

www.mndassociation.org/education

Support grants and equipment loan

Where statutory provision is not available, we may be able to offer a support grant or loan equipment.

www.mndassociation.org/getting-support

Research into MND

We fund and promote research that leads to new understanding and treatment and brings us closer to a cure.

www.mndassociation.org/research

MND register

The MND Register of England, Wales and Northern Ireland aims to collect information about every person living with MND to help plan care and discover more about the cause of the disease.

www.mndregister.ac.uk

Regional staff

We have a network of regional staff with specialist knowledge of MND. They work closely with local statutory services and community care providers. Contact MND Connect for further information.

Email: mndconnect@mndassociation.org
Phone: 0808 802 6262

MND care centres and networks

We fund and develop care centres and networks across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, which offer specialist multidisciplinary care for people with MND.

www.mndassociation.org/care-centres

Branches and groups

We have volunteer-led branches and groups nationwide providing local support and practical help to people with MND and their carers.

www.mndassociation.org/branchesandgroups

Association visitors (AVs)

AVs are trained volunteers who provide one-to-one local support to people affected by MND. They can support people affected by MND in person, by telephone or by email or through support groups.

www.mndassociation.org/associationvisitors

We value your feedback

Your feedback helps improve our information for the benefit of people living with MND and those who care for them. Visit www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/mndprofessionals or email your comments to **infofeedback@mndassociation.org**

If you would like to help us by reviewing future versions of our information resources, please email us at **infofeedback@mndassociation.org**

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