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## **How to tell if my voice prosthesis is leaking?**

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### **What is leaking?**

Leaking means that fluids or solids go into the breathing tube or airway through the centre of the voice prosthesis. This is also called aspiration.

### **Is leaking serious?**

Leaking is very unsafe. It can lead to breathing problems and infections such as pneumonia.

### **How do I know if my voice prosthesis is leaking?**

Shine a flashlight on your neck while you take a sip of water. Look for water to drip through the centre or around the edge of the prosthesis. If there is a leak you may cough because the water is going into your airway.

You may need to take another sip to check again.

### **What happens if I have leaking?**

Try cleaning the centre of the prosthesis. Look for leaking as you take a sip of water again.

If you still have leaking, you may need to have your prosthesis changed.

### **Who do I call if I think my prosthesis may be leaking?**

Please contact \_\_\_\_\_

Speech-Language Pathologist at 905-521-6101.

**Please turn over →**

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## **Cleaning and Things to Check When You have a Voice Prosthesis**

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- Clean the prosthesis at least 2 to 3 times a day. Clean it more often when needed such as when you are not getting any voice.
- Use a tilting mirror and flashlight to help you see.
- Useful cleaning tools include cotton tip applicators, pipettes and brushes.
- If a mucous plug or crusting forms in the centre of the prosthesis, try using tweezers to remove the plug. For example, a mucous plug may have formed when you cannot see the white circle valve.
- If thick saliva is plugging the prosthesis try using a cotton applicator dabbed into some cooking oil on the white circle valve. For example, thick saliva may have formed when you do not have a voice ½ hour after cleaning.
- Cooking oil does not solve the problem if the valve is blocked by mucous or phlegm.
- If phlegm is crusted around the stoma, dampen some gauze with water and pat the area. Do not scrub.
- Check that the prosthesis is working by trying to produce voice. Check for leakage by having something to drink.
- A prosthesis needs to be replaced when it leaks saliva or fluids. You will notice that you cough after drinking and you may see drops of liquid around the prosthesis. If this happens, contact your Speech-Language Pathologist at 905-521-6101.
- A small amount of blood around your voice prosthesis or in your phlegm after the prosthesis has been changed is normal. If bleeding continues, contact your doctor.

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