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# Oral & Respiratory Suction Unit

## Purpose

The purpose of oral and respiratory suction units is to provide assistance in the removal of secretions from the oral cavity and respiratory tract. Individuals that have a compromised swallowing or coughing mechanism need to have these secretions removed. Because suction units provide vacuum pressures that are applied to body surfaces, clinical monitoring is required and they require a prescription to be dispensed. Your suction unit and its supplies are being supplied to you in conjunction with the prescription obtained from your physician.

Always read and abide by all manufacturers' operating instructions.

## Types

Oral and respiratory suction units come in two basic types: stationary and portable. Stationary suction units are electrical devices that only operate while plugged into an electrical outlet and have no battery operation capabilities. Portable suction units can be operated while plugged in and for a limited time while on battery power.

Oral and respiratory suction units produce controlled negative pressure (vacuum) that draws fluid through disposable tubing that is connected to a collection container. The fluids are collected in the container and can be disposed. There are two types of collection containers available for suction units: disposable and reusable. Disposable collection containers are designed for single-patient use and are disposed of when full or when suction therapy is completed. Disposable containers may be cleaned and reused for the same individual. Disposable containers are constructed of plastic and can only be reused a limited number of times on the same individual. Reusable suction containers are usually constructed of high-grade plastic or glass and are designed to withstand repeated disinfection and sterilization. Reusable containers are designed for long-term use and can be sterilized between individuals.

The vacuum pressure generated by suction units needs to be controlled at specific levels when applied to delicate body tissues. The gauge that displays the vacuum pressure is not exact and is designed for reference only. Your professional respiratory or nursing staff will instruct you on what vacuum pressure is best suited for your medical needs. The vacuum pressure is expressed as millimeters of mercury (mmHg).

All suction units are supplied as part of a treatment plan. Your physician's treatment plan and your respiratory care plan includes the following prescription and guidelines:

Recommended Vacuum Pressure: \_\_\_\_\_

Catheter Type: \_\_\_\_\_

Suction Frequency: \_\_\_\_\_

Suction Unit and Model: \_\_\_\_\_

Battery Power:                      Yes        No

## Accessories

Suction units only provide the vacuum source and require suction tubing and a catheter in order to apply the suction to a specific source. Suction tubing is disposable and connects from the suction canister to the catheter. Suction catheters come in many styles that serve different functions. See the Patient Education Sheet that describes the specific type of suction procedure. Your supplies have a useful life that varies depending upon use and will need to be replaced periodically. We will contact you occasionally regarding your supply needs.

## Use

The most important part of using a suction unit is to understand the suctioning procedure and follow it every time. There are no shortcuts when suctioning. Suctioning can either be a clean or sterile procedure. Your respiratory care practitioner or home care nursing staff will inform you as to which suctioning procedure applies to your need.

Your suction unit needs to be placed on a flat, sturdy surface that does not obstruct the air inlets. Plug the cord from the unit into a properly grounded electrical outlet. Always wash your hands with soap and water before suctioning. Connect the suction tubing to the outlet port on the lid of the collection container. Put on protective gloves. Attach the suction catheter to the other end of the suction tubing. Turn on the suction unit and kink the suction tubing and adjust the pressure to the prescribed level and release the tubing. Suction as required. Suction sterile water through the tubing to clear secretions. Turn off the unit when finished.

Inspect the suction tubing and collection bottle for leaks and cracks before each use. Each type of suctioning requires specific procedures that may vary from what is described on this education sheet. Follow the suction procedure listed on the Patient Education Sheet that describes your suctioning procedure.

If your suction unit has a rechargeable battery, plug the unit in when not traveling and when indoors. It is best to fully charge the battery before using on battery power.

## Cleaning

Follow the below instructions for cleaning your suction unit **each day**:

1. Unplug the suction unit.
2. Wash your hands with disinfecting soap.
3. Remove suction container and lid before removing from the unit.
4. Discard contents in toilet and flush. Be careful not to splash contents.
5. Wash in hot water with dishwashing soap to remove any debris.
6. Rinse under hot tap water for at least 30 seconds.
7. Place upside down on a clean paper towel and allow to air dry.
8. Reassemble the unit, plug back into an electrical outlet, and test all connections.

Your suction tubing can be cleaned in the same manner. Your suction catheters must be discarded after use.

## Safety

The safe use of a suction unit requires it to be used as instructed, which includes the following safety precautions:

- Always wear gloves when suctioning or handling secretions.
- Ensure that suction tubing is routed and secured so that it does not become entangled and/or damaged.
- Ensure that air intake areas are kept free from obstruction.
- Ensure that the suction unit is kept clean and dust-free.
- Never perform suction procedure without verifying suction pressure.
- Never immerse the suction unit in water.
- Never operate suction unit without the bacteria filter present.
- Never substitute any material for the bacteria filter.
- Never add, remove, or disable any feature, part, or function of your suction unit.
- Never allow any untrained person or child to touch or manipulate your suction unit.
- Do not try to fix, repair, or lubricate the suction unit.
- Do not use an extension cord when connecting the suction unit.
- Do not under any circumstances, cut or remove the round grounding plug from the power cord plug.
- Do not use any three (3) prong to two (2) prong electrical adapters.
- Do not plug into an electrical outlet controlled by a light switch.

In order to ensure care and provide operator safety, make sure you follow these safety guidelines:

- Use nightlights to increase vision around areas of use.
- Wipe up any water or slippery floor spills.
- Remove tripping hazards (loose floorboards, uneven floors, throw rugs, extension cords, clutter, etc.)
- Install grab bars, use bath mats with suction cups, and use an elevated toilet seat to prevent falls.

## Maintenance

Keep your suction unit clean and dust-free by wiping down with a damp cloth. Never use anything but a damp cloth to keep your equipment clean. Only qualified repair technicians should diagnose, perform maintenance, or repair any part of your suction unit. Call your provider if your suction unit is not functioning properly.

Each suction unit has a bacteria filter that keeps fluids from entering the unit. This filter needs to be changed at regular intervals. Never substitute any material for the bacteria filter.