

Preventing Ventilator Associated Pneumonia in the Hospital

What is Ventilator Associated Pneumonia (VAP)?

Ventilator Associated Pneumonia (VAP) is a type of lung infection. It can occur in patients who are on a breathing machine in the hospital. This machine is called a ventilator.

Ventilators can be life-saving, but they also make it easier for germs to get into the patient's lungs. This can increase a patient's chance of getting pneumonia. To help prevent VAP, our staff takes extra steps when caring for your child. Care in the hospital may be different from how you care for your child at home.

How is it treated?

Most of the time, these infections can be treated with antibiotics. Your healthcare provider will decide which antibiotic is best. This will depend on which germs are causing the infection.

What can be done to prevent infection?

You will learn how to safely care for your child on a ventilator in the hospital. Everyone should follow these guidelines. Be sure to remind others if they forget. Ask staff how you can help with daily cares.

- **Clean hands.** Use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after touching your child or the ventilator.



- **Clean the inside of your child's mouth** on a regular basis. This will keep bacteria from growing and getting down into the lungs.



- Staff will use a special kit to brush your child's teeth and clean their mouth while on a ventilator.
- Ask when your child last had oral care. You want to be sure it is done as often as it needs to be. Your child's nurse will tell you how often it needs to be done.
- For breastfed infants, oral care will be done every three hours and as needed. A toothette with breast milk will be used if available. If there is no breast milk, sterile water will be used.

- Keep the **head of the bed elevated**. This will help prevent secretions from getting in your child's lungs. With some surgeries, the bed needs to be at a certain angle.



This means that the bed may not be able to be elevated. If the bed is flat, ask your child's caregiver if it should be raised.



- **Suctioning.** In the hospital, staff uses 2 separate suction setups. The first is for the mouth and throat. This is called oral suction. The other setup is to suction airway secretions. This is to suction the trach or endotracheal tubes.
 - Everyone who suction your child will wash their hands, use gloves and use a new, **sterile suction kit**. This must be done every time your child is suctioned.
 - Talk with your child's care team about any questions related to ventilator care or how to prevent VAP.

What happens if my child goes home on a ventilator?

If your child goes home (discharged), the trach-vent team will give you more information on how to care for your child at home.

All infants under 1 year should sleep alone, on their back. The infant should also sleep on a firm, flat surface such as a crib or pack and play.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any concerns or if your child has special health care needs not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.