What is a cuff?

A tracheostomy cuff is a balloon around the outside of the tracheostomy (trach) tube. When the balloon is filled with air, it will fit the shape of your trachea (windpipe). The balloon seals off the space between the wall of your windpipe and the trach tube. This seal is needed when you are on a breathing machine (ventilator) or if you have problems with choking. If the cuff is not inflated, air can pass around the trach tube.

To inflate the cuff, you put air through the cuff inflation line. There is a pilot balloon on the inflation line that shows when the cuff is inflated or deflated. The pilot balloon does not show how much air is in the cuff. Your nurse or respiratory therapist will measure how much air you should put in the cuff.

Important note: The cuff should only be inflated if you are instructed to do so by your doctor.
How to inflate the cuff

1. Use a _____ milliliter (ml) syringe and fill it with _____ ml of air.
2. Attach the syringe tightly to the cuff inflation line.
3. Inject the air.

Note: Each time your trach tube is changed, ask the respiratory therapist or nurse to tell you how much air to put in the cuff.

How to deflate the cuff

1. Push the plunger on the syringe all the way in to remove the air.
2. Attach the syringe to the cuff inflation line.
3. Pull back on the plunger of the syringe until the pilot balloon on the cuff inflation line is flat.

When should I inflate and deflate the cuff?

1. Inflate your cuff: __________________________________________________________
2. Deflate your cuff: _________________________________________________________

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or e-mail health-info@osu.edu.

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