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Oral suction

Information for health and social care professionals

A build-up of secretions may lead to discomfort and increased risk of the airway becoming blocked. Oral suction 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.

Training in how to use the oral suction unit should be given 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're 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 on whether suctioning is appropriate in cases where the person is unable to consent, but not carrying out the procedure would damage their health.

It is also important to check whether a person has recorded an Advance Decision to Refuse Treatment (ADRT) and, if they have, 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
- 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).

For the 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, as this could force the object further into the airway, possibly causing 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 healthcare professional will advise you on the ideal 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 invasive 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 as required.
- 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 should 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. 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 page 3), 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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How the MND Association can support you and your team

We support health and social care professionals to provide the best possible care for people living with MND, their carers and families. We do this in a number of ways:

MND Connect

Our helpline offers help, information and support, and signposting to other services and agencies. The service is for people living with MND, carers, family members, health and social care professionals and Association staff and volunteers who directly support people with MND.

Telephone: **0808 802 6262**

Email: **mndconnect@mndassociation.org**

Please contact MND Connect if you have any questions about the information in this publication.

Information resources

We produce high quality information resources for health and social care professionals who work with people with MND. We also have a wide range of resources for people living with and affected by MND.

Downloads of all our information sheets and most of our publications are available from our website at **www.mndassociation.org/publications**. You can also order our publications directly from the MND Connect team.

MND Association website

Access information for health and social care professionals on our website at **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, such as conferences and masterclasses. Find out more at **www.mndassociation.org/education**

MND support grants and equipment loan

Where statutory funding or provision has been explored and is not available, we may be able to provide a support grant or equipment loan.

Our support grant service consists of providing care and quality of life grants for people with MND. This service is supported by MND Association branch and group funds, and by the Association's central fund.

Our equipment loan service is focused on three core items of equipment to help people with day-to-day tasks and communication:

- riser-recliner chairs
- specialist communication aids
- portable suction units.

For suction units, a small charge is made to statutory services for carriage, maintenance and cleaning.

Referrals for support grants or equipment loan need to be made by an occupational therapist, speech and language therapist or other relevant health or social care professional.

For enquiries about MND support grants or equipment loan, call the MND Support Services team on **01604 611802**, email **support.services@mndassociation.org** or visit **www.mndassociation.org/getting-support**

Communication aids service

This service helps people affected by MND and health and social care professionals with queries about communication aids. The service provides limited financial support for communication aids or some items on loan, if unavailable or delayed through health and social care services. Our aim is to improve provision and information on a local and national level, through collaboration with professionals. Call **01604 611767** or email **communicationaids@mndassociation.org**

Wheelchair service

If you are seeking information on wheelchairs, or if there are delays in assessment or provision of an appropriate wheelchair for someone with MND, our wheelchair service may be able to help, through training, joint assessments, advice or support. For our wheelchair service, call MND Connect on **0808 802 6262** or email **wheelchairs@mndassociation.org**

Research into MND

We fund and promote research that leads to new understanding and treatment and brings us closer to a cure. Contact the Research Development team on **01604 611880** or **research@mndassociation.org**. Alternatively, visit **www.mndassociation.org/research** for more information. For the latest research news, visit our research blog at **www.mndresearch.wordpress.com**

Our peer-to-peer research and care community blog (RECCOB) has a number of reporters who write updates on MND-related workshops and events around the world. Subscribe for email alerts at **www.reccob.wordpress.com**

International Symposium on ALS/MND

Each year we organise the world's largest clinical and biomedical research conference on MND. It is the premier event in the MND research calendar for discussion on the latest advances in research and clinical management, attracting more than 800 delegates from at least 30 countries. Find out more at **www.mndassociation.org/symposium**

MND Association membership

Join us now and help fight MND. Membership costs £12 for individuals. It is free for people with MND and for carers, spouses or partners of people living with MND. Call **01604 611855** or email **membership@mndassociation.org**

Local support

Regional care development advisers

We have a network of regional care development advisers (RCDAs) covering England, Wales and Northern Ireland. RCDAs have specialist knowledge of the care and management of MND. They work closely with local statutory services and community care providers to ensure effective support for people affected by MND. RCDAs provide education for health and social care professionals in MND, and are champions at influencing care services in their respective areas.

MND care centres and networks

Care centres and networks are teams of professionals who are specialists in MND. We fund and develop care centres and networks across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, which offer specialist clinical expertise from diagnosis onwards.

Branches and groups

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

Association visitors (AVs)

Association visitors provide one-to-one local support to people affected by MND. Managed by regional care development advisers, they are volunteers with experience of MND who can visit people affected by MND within their homes or contact them by telephone, email or through local support groups. They can also provide a link with health and social care professionals. You may be in contact with Association visitors following up on queries from the families they support.

Please send us your feedback on
Oral suction

Thank you for taking the time to provide your feedback on one of our information resources.

This questionnaire can be accessed online if preferred, using the following link:
www.surveymonkey.com/s/professionalinformation

What is your profession or specialism?

Did you find this resource useful?

Yes Somewhat Not really No Please explain your answer

Will this information resource help you to provide people affected by MND with any of the following?
(tick all that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> an increased understanding of their symptoms | <input type="checkbox"/> more confidence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> an increased understanding of their condition | <input type="checkbox"/> improved quality of life |
| <input type="checkbox"/> more independence | <input type="checkbox"/> a greater ability to maintain dignity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> an increased ability to raise awareness of their needs | |

Were there any particular topics that were useful to you?

Was there any information that you didn't find useful or relevant?

Are there any other MND-related topics that you'd like more information about?

Do you have any other feedback about this resource or our other information for professionals?

Would you be happy to help us improve our information by becoming an expert reviewer?

Yes (please include your email address below) No

Do you have any experiences of working with people with MND you could share as an anonymous quote or case study for future resources?

Yes (please include your email address below) No

Please return your completed form to:

Education and information team
MND Association
PO Box 246
Northampton NN1 2PR

Name:

Email:

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following people for their valuable contributions to this information sheet:

**Ema Swingwood,
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About us

The MND Association was founded in 1979 by a group of volunteers with experience of living with or caring for someone with MND.

Since then, we have grown significantly, with an ever-increasing community of volunteers, supporters and staff, all sharing the same goal – to support people with MND and everyone who cares for them, both now and in the future.

We are the only national charity in England, Wales and Northern Ireland focused on MND care, research and campaigning.

Our mission

We improve care and support for people with MND, their families and carers.

We fund and promote research that leads to new understanding and treatments, and brings us closer to a cure for MND.

We campaign and raise awareness so the needs of people with MND and everyone who cares for them are recognised and addressed by wider society.

About MND

- MND is a fatal, rapidly progressing disease that affects the brain and spinal cord.
- It attacks the nerves that control movement so muscles no longer work. MND does not usually affect the senses such as sight, sound and feeling.
- It can leave people locked in a failing body, unable to move, talk and eventually breathe.
- It affects people from all communities.
- Some people may experience changes in thinking and behaviour, with a proportion experiencing a rare form of dementia.
- MND kills a third of people within a year and more than half within two years of diagnosis.
- A person's lifetime risk of developing MND is up to 1 in 300.
- Six people per day are diagnosed with MND in the UK.
- MND kills six people per day in the UK.
- It has no cure.

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MND Association

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