

BREATHING TUBE REMOVAL

When science and medicine can no longer improve a patient's health, the health care team may talk about removing the breathing tube.

WHAT IS A BREATHING TUBE REMOVAL?

If a patient can't breathe well enough to get the right amount of air to the body, the health care team places a breathing tube into the mouth and through the airway to the lung. This helps move the air in and out of the body.

In some cases, a patient with this tube may have other complex health issues that will keep them from getting better. If this happens, the patient, family and health care team may think about a "breathing tube removal." This means the breathing tube will be removed and the patient will be made comfortable and breathe on their own until they die. The patient will be given pain medicine and offered other support to be as comfortable as possible. In most cases, patients do not have any physical or emotional distress.



WHEN WOULD SOMEONE THINK ABOUT A BREATHING TUBE REMOVAL?

- The main illness such as cancer cannot be cured.
- The breathing tube makes quality of life worse.
- If someone does not want to live for a long period of time with a breathing tube.
- The breathing tube is the only thing keeping the patient alive.

THE HEALTH CARE TEAM CAN HELP

A doctor, nurse or social worker can answer any questions about this process. The health care team and/or chaplain can provide support and guidance for family members to make the right choice for their loved one if the patient's wishes are unknown.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE HEALTH CARE TEAM:

1. How will the patient be kept comfortable?
2. What happens after the tube is removed?
3. What support is available for family members during and after the removal?