



This standard of practice is to support the PSW in providing safe, respectful, and effective personal care to the public population in a dignified and ethical approach. Standards of Practice outline the expectations of the PSW and their responsibility in the delivery of care.

Ventilator & / or Tracheostomy Care

A tracheostomy is an operation that makes an incision in the skin over the trachea (windpipe in throat area), making a surgical wound in the trachea or windpipe to create an open airway to enable a person to breath. The care of a person(s) with a tracheotomy that may or may not be on a ventilator can be performed by a PSW who has been delegated by a RHP to perform these “Special Care” tasks. Ensure you know your scope of practice. Due to the complexity of this type of person(s) and all the controls that must be in place, a certified RHP or an RHP should be assigned to the person(s) care team. Trach care that includes cleaning around the stoma, cleaning or replacing the inner cannula (if the person(s) is NOT on a ventilator) can be done by the PSW who has been shown the procedure and is deemed competent by the RHP. Emergency procedures should also be taught at the time of initial assignment and should be reviewed regularly to ensure that the procedure is safe and being performed correctly.

Suctioning a tracheostomy can be performed by a PSW only if the person(s) is NOT dependent on a ventilator and the PSW has been delegated the act from an RHP. The PSW can ONLY suction to the point of the distal end of the cannula. Deep suctioning CANNOT be performed by a PSW. Suctioning can only last for 5 seconds and ample recovery time must be allowed before a second attempt to clear secretions. Changing of tracheostomy ties / tapes must be done by an RHP and the PSW may assist. Always ensure the inner obturator is with the person(s) at all times in case of emergency where the tracheostomy becomes dislodged.

PSW – Personal Support Worker

RN/RPN – Registered Nurse/ Registered Practical Nurse

RHPA – Regulated Health Professions Act

Resources - Sheila A. Sorrentino, PhD, RN, Leighann Remmert, MS, RN and Mary J. Wilk, RN, GNC(C), BA, BScN, MN, Mosby's Canadian Textbook for the Support Worker, 3rd Edition