Emergency tracheostomy management - Patent upper airway

Call for airway expert help
Look, listen & feel at the mouth and tracheostomy
A Mapleson C system (e.g. 'Waters circuit') may help assessment if available
Use **waveform capnography** when available: exhaled carbon dioxide indicates a patent or partially patent airway

Is the patient breathing?

No → Call Resuscitation Team
CPR if no pulse / signs of life

Yes → Apply high flow oxygen to **BOTH** the face and the tracheostomy

Assess tracheostomy patency

Remove **speaking valve** or **cap** (if present)
Remove **inner tube**
Some inner tubes need re-inserting to connect to breathing circuits

Can you pass a suction catheter?

Yes →
The tracheostomy tube is patent
Perform tracheal suction
Consider partial obstruction
Ventilate (via tracheostomy) if not breathing
Continue ABCDE assessment

No →
Deflate the **cuff** (if present)
Look, listen & feel at the mouth and tracheostomy
Use waveform capnography or Mapleson C if available

Is the patient stable or improving?

Yes →
Tracheostomy tube partially obstructed or displaced
Continue ABCDE assessment

No →
REMOVE THE TRACHEOSTOMY TUBE
Look, listen & feel at the mouth and tracheostomy. Ensure oxygen re-applied to face and stoma
Use waveform capnography or Mapleson C if available

Is the patient breathing?

No → Call Resuscitation team
CPR if no pulse / signs of life

Yes → Continue ABCDE assessment

Primary emergency oxygenation

Standard **ORAL airway** manoeuvres
Cover the stoma (swabs / hand). Use:
- Bag-valve-mask
- Oral or nasal airway adjuncts
- Supraglottic airway device e.g. LMA

Tracheostomy STOMA ventilation
- Paediatric face mask applied to stoma
- LMA applied to stoma

Secondary emergency oxygenation

Attempt **ORAL intubation**
Prepare for difficult intubation
Uncut tube, advanced beyond stoma

Attempt **intubation of STOMA**
Small tracheostomy tube / 6.0 cuffed ETT
Consider Aintree catheter and fibreoptic 'scope / Bougie / Airway exchange catheter