

Let's Talk About...

Nasal Suctioning

What is nasal suctioning?

Nasal [NAY-zuhl] suctioning [SUK-shun-eeng] is used to clear mucus from your child's nose, back of the throat, and mouth so they can breathe more easily.

Why does my child need nasal suctioning?

Many problems can cause too much mucus to collect in the back of the throat, nose or mouth, including:

- Infections
- Problems with the nerves or the brain that prevent coughing or swallowing

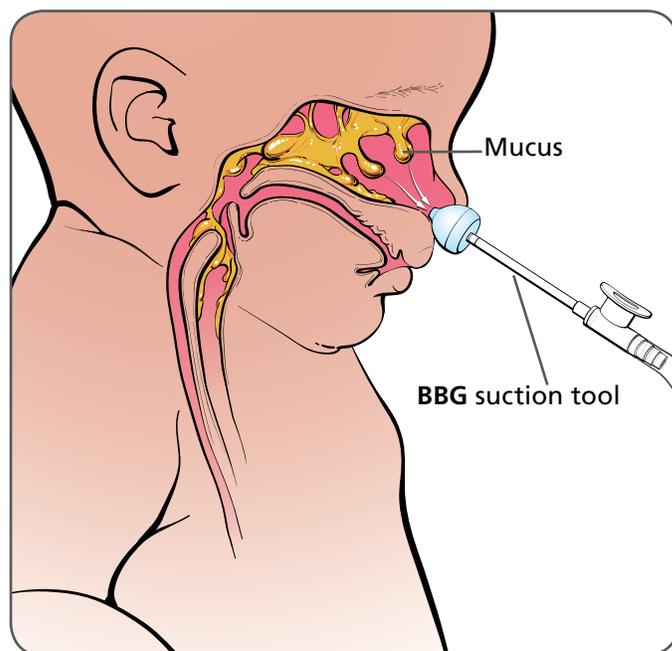
While in the hospital, your child may need nasal suctioning if:

- Mucus is seen or heard in your child's nose or mouth
- Your child needs oxygen, or more oxygen than usual
- Sounds are heard in your child's chest that could mean there is too much mucus in their lungs
- Your child is working hard to breathe, breathing too fast, using more muscles to breathe, or cannot breathe and eat at the same time

How is nasal suctioning done?

The 3 main ways to remove mucus are:

- BBG suctioning
- Bulb suctioning
- Nasopharyngeal [nay-zoh-fair-en-GEE-uhl] (NP) suctioning

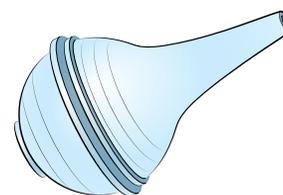


What is BBG suction?

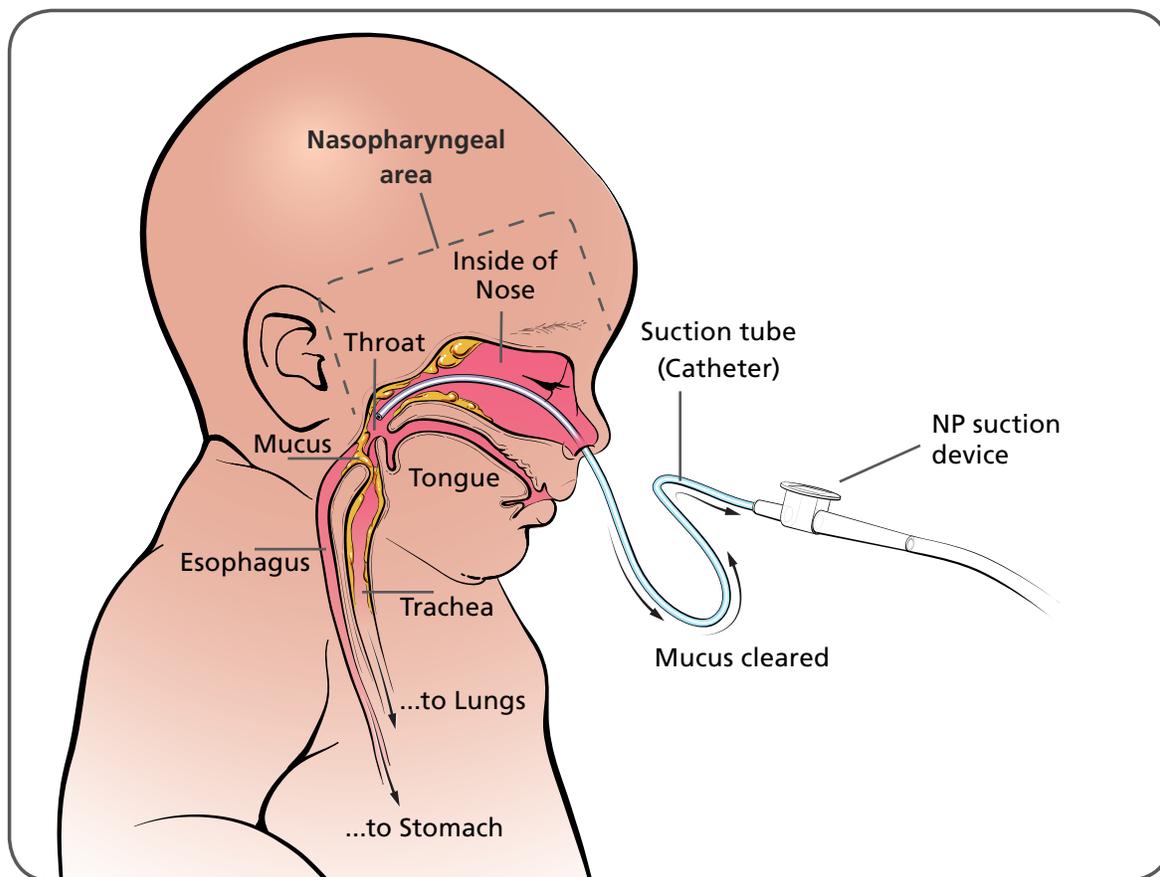
A BBG tool is a suction tube that is most commonly used in the hospital. It has a small bulb-shaped piece of plastic at one end. This end is placed against the outside of the nostril, covering the opening. The other end is connected to a suction machine. Light suction is turned on and mucus is removed without having to insert anything inside the nostrils.

What is bulb suction?

A bulb suction device is a round, rubbery object with a short tube that is used to remove mucus from your child's clogged nose or mouth. It can be used in the hospital, doctor's office, or at home. See [page 3](#) for instructions on how to do bulb suctioning.



Bulb suction device



What is NP Suction?

NP (nasopharyngeal) suction is a way to remove extra mucus from the back of the throat. “Nasopharyngeal” refers to the nose and upper part of the throat. Most children will need to be held still during suctioning.

During NP suctioning, a thin tube is attached to a larger suction tube. The small tube is gently placed in your child’s nostril until it touches the back of the throat. Light suctioning is turned on and the tube is slowly pulled out of your child’s nose. The suction will usually make your child cough as it clears the mucus. The coughing helps bring the mucus up to the back of the throat so it can be cleared. A few drops of saline (salt water) may be put in your child’s nose to help loosen the mucus and allow the tube to slip into the nose more easily.

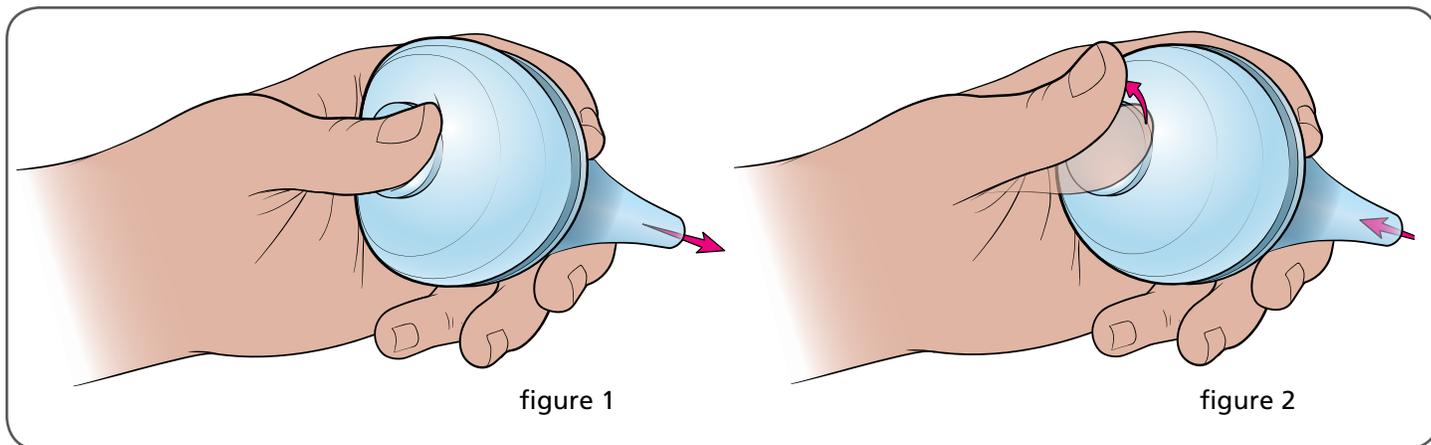
NP suctioning may need to be done several times to get all the mucus out of your child’s throat. After your child’s nose is clear, your child’s mouth may also need suctioning.

How long will my child need suctioning?

How much suctioning is needed will depend on:

- How sick your child is
- The amount and thickness of the mucus
- How well your child responds to suctioning

When your child is feeling better and is able to breathe comfortably, sleep well, and eat easily, suctioning may no longer be needed. This may be true even if the nose sounds very stuffy. Sometimes saline drops alone are enough to clear out the nose. If saline drops alone are not working, then use the drops followed by bulb suctioning (see next page).



How can I suction my child at home?

Usually children stay in the hospital until mucus can be managed with bulb suctioning and breathing is not difficult. Family members are taught to use bulb suction to help clear mucus when at home.

Here are some tips for bulb suctioning:

- Explain to your child what you are doing.
- Have tissues ready to clean the bulb between suctionings.
- Keep your child from moving their head too much and grabbing the suction bulb.
 - **If there is only one person available to suction**, you can use the following hold to allow yourself to have one free hand for suctioning:
 - Wrap your child’s body in a towel or blanket, making sure arms and hands are inside the bundle.
 - Your child may be able to wiggle out of these blankets, so keep one hand on your child at all times.
 - Make sure you hold their head still to prevent injuring the inside of the nose.
 - **If there are two people available**, one person should gently hold your child’s head with one hand while using the other hand to hold both of your child’s hands out of the way. The second person will suction.
- Use a new suction bulb for each illness. Use a different suction bulb for each child. When your child is better, throw the suction bulb away.

To use the suction bulb properly:

- 1 Put a few drops of saline into each nostril. Use enough to loosen the fluids and allow for easier suctioning. Buy the drops recommended by your doctor or pharmacist. Do not try to make them yourself. Never use over-the-counter nose drops that contain any medicine.
- 2 Hold the bulb with the tip between your first and middle fingers (see figure 1). With your thumb, squeeze the bulb and push out all the air.
- 3 Gently, insert the tip into a nostril. If possible, hold the opposite nostril closed right before releasing the suction bulb.
- 4 Slowly release your thumb on the bulb. As you release your thumb, mucus will be suctioned out of the nose (see figure 2).
- 5 Remove the suction bulb and release the other nostril.
- 6 Clean the mucus from the bulb by squeezing it out onto the tissue. Rinse the bulb with water.
- 7 Repeat these steps with the other nostril.

It may be helpful to also suction your child’s mouth. When suctioning the mouth, be sure to put the tip of the suction bulb in the side of your child’s mouth to avoid causing your child to gag.

Allow time for your child to recover and breathe in between suctioning attempts.

