Mosby's Nursing Video Skills

Procedure Guideline for Performing Oropharyngeal Suctioning

1. Gather the necessary equipment and supplies.

2. Perform hand hygiene, and provide for the patient’s privacy.

3. Introduce yourself to the patient and family, if present.

4. Identify the patient using two identifiers, such as the patient’s name and birth date or name and medical record number, according to your agency’s policy. Compare the identifiers in the patient’s MAR/medical record with information on the patient’s identification bracelet.

5. Apply a pulse oximeter to monitor the patient’s oxygen saturation level.

6. Help the patient into a Semi-Fowlers or sitting position.

7. Assess for signs that the patient may require suctioning such as restlessness, gurgling, drooling, ineffective coughing, gastric secretions or vomit in the mouth.

8. Drape the patient’s neck and chest.

9. Apply clean gloves. Put on a mask, gown or face shield if splashing is likely.

10. Fill a cup or basin with approximately 100 mL of sterile water or sterile normal saline.

11. Connect one end of the connecting tubing to the suction machine and turn on the suction. Set the vacuum regulator to the appropriate setting, according to the manufacturer’s instructions. Then connect the other end of the tubing to the Yankauer suction catheter.

12. Check to ensure that the suction machine is functioning properly by placing the tip of the catheter in water or saline and suctioning a small amount from the cup or the basin.

13. Remove the patient’s oxygen mask, if present. Keep the oxygen mask near the patient’s face. A nasal cannula may remain in place.

14. Insert the catheter into the patient’s mouth moving along the gum line to the pharynx. Move the catheter around the mouth until all secretions have cleared. Encourage the patient to cough. Replace the patient’s oxygen mask. Do not at any time apply suction to the buccal mucosa.

15. Rinse the catheter with water in a cup or basin until the connecting tubing has been cleared of secretions. Turn off the suction. Wash the patient’s face if secretions are present on the patient’s skin.
16. Observe the patient’s respiratory status. Repeat the procedure, if indicated. You may need to use a standard suction catheter to reach into the trachea if the patient’s respiratory status has not improved.

17. Remove the towel, cloth, or disposable drape from the patient, and place it in the trash or in the laundry if it is soiled. Reposition the patient. The Sims’ position encourages drainage and should be used if the patient has a decreased level of consciousness.

18. Place the catheter in a clean, dry area, such as in a bag attached to the bedrail.

19. Position the patient, and provide oral hygiene if needed.

20. Discard the remainder of the water into the appropriate receptacle. Discard the disposable cup into the appropriate receptacle.

21. Remove your gloves and mask or face shield, and dispose of them in the appropriate receptacles.

22. Perform hand hygiene.

23. Help the patient into a comfortable position, and place toiletries and personal items within reach.

24. Place the call light within easy reach, and make sure the patient knows how to use it to summon assistance.

25. To ensure the patient’s safety, raise the appropriate number of side rails and lower the bed to the lowest position.


27. Document and report the patient’s response and expected or unexpected outcomes. Document the procedure including how the patient tolerated the suctioning. Document the amount, consistency, color and odor of any secretions.