

Check the neck

- “Okay, let’s go! This guy’s out.
- Hurry it up there, move along.
- Let’s go, I’ll check the other guy.
- Come on, come on. Come on, careful now.
- He’s dead?
- He’s badly hurt.
- Watch it.
- Hold it now.
- What’s the matter?
- How is he? Is he alive?
- What about some access, huh?”

Alive? Yes. And not critically injured. But because they have failed to take a simple precautionary check, the very people who have rushed to his aid may cost him his life, for the accident victim is a laryngectomee.

- “Move back, now. Move it back, move it back a little bit. Where are you going, fella? Wait a minute.
- Maybe I can help down here.
- You can help him?
- Yes.
- All right. Go ahead.
- Check the neck.”

CHECK THE NECK

“That man is a laryngectomee.”

Fortunately, this time, another laryngectomee was at the scene. Like the injured man, he has had a total surgical removal of his voice box, the larynx. He’s had to learn to speak again and most vitally to breathe again solely through an opening in his throat. He is one of thousands of neck breathers. For them, mouth-to-mouth resuscitation is useless.

- “Doesn’t fit. Gotta’ get a good seal.
- Just turn it a little, Will. Atta’ boy!
- Now, it fits good. The chest is rising. The chest is rising.
- Yeah, he’s coming around. Good. He’s coming to.
- Help him sit up here. He’s coming to.
- How do you feel, fella?
- Fine.
- How did you know?”

Every laryngectomee should display this sticker. One or more occupants of this car is a laryngectomee. He or she breathes through an opening in the neck. Do not twist head, do not throw water on the head, keep opening clear of all foreign matter. Apply oxygen to neck opening only. Mouth to stoma is effective. In addition to the sticker, which is often found on the rear window, a laryngectomee might also have this first aid booklet in the car or in this special litter bag attached to the dashboard of his car. Everyone who might become interested and concerned in the administration of aid to the neck breather is urged to call for a free copy to county units of the American Cancer Society. Their telephone numbers are listed in the phone directory. This booklet provides detailed information including a diagrammatic explanation of how neck breathing is accomplished.

This is a cross-section of the conventional manner of breathing. Air enters through the nose or

mouth, is carried down the trachea or windpipe, then into the bronchial tubes and finally enters the lungs. Exhalation reverses the process.

In some instances of cancer of the larynx, the entire voice box is surgically removed and the trachea diverted to the skin's surface. A laryngectomy. This surgical operation completely and permanently eliminates all connection between mouth and neck, and the lungs.

NO AIRWAY TO LUNGS ONLY AIRWAY

A tube is inserted in the opening through which the patient breathes. If we were to place a plastic bag over the head of a conventional breather, he would suffocate in a matter of moments. This man however is a neck breather and places no reliance whatsoever on air entering from the nose and mouth. In fact, for him, the application of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation or oxygen to the nose or mouth would only force air into the stomach, not the lungs. Unless such aid were directly applied to the stoma, this man would die.

In the event a laryngectomee need to assist another laryngectomee or a conventional breather, two methods of resuscitation will be demonstrated. First the Sylvester method. Pulling the arms outward over the victim's head should allow air to go in. Pressing the lower chest under the diaphragm should cause air to go out. Repeat until there is evidence of results. Keep the victim's head straight. This will allow the stoma to retain its shape. This is most important.

This is the Holger Nielsen method. First, put something under the neck of the laryngectomee, between the stoma and the ground. This will keep dirt particles from being inhaled or sucked into the stoma. Propping his nose and chin in the heel of a shoe will keep his head from slipping out of position. For here again, it is most important to keep his head straight, so that the stoma will not change its shape.

Press firmly, allowing the weight of the upper body to assist in pressing the victim's diaphragm. Release and pull on the arms. Repeat, until there is evidence of results.

“Yes, sir, I have to wear this bracelet like every laryngectomee wherever...”

This bracelet not only identifies a neck breather but also gives special medical information about him. He might be a diabetic or allergic to antibiotics. They will want to know that at the hospital. A collect call any time, day or night, to the phone number listed on the bracelet, giving his serial number will immediately elicit any information provided in his international file.

“On the sidewalk! Everybody, on the sidewalk! Please.”

The International Association of Laryngectomees, an affiliate of the American Cancer Society, can provide further information about the men and women who have become neck breathers. Call on them, they will be grateful.

A human life was saved this time because someone was aware of the need to check the neck.

“I want a hot dog.”

Many of these people have fought a battle with cancer. They have not come out unscarred, but they have learned more than ever the value of life. And they want very much to lick it.

The removal of the larynx leaves the laryngectomee voiceless only temporarily. Those who are able learn the esophageal method of speech, others require mechanical aids.

“Was you there last year?”

- Yes, I thought it was very good.
- So did I.
- Yeah, but Joe shouldn't drink so much.
- I know that. [...] Women, women and drink.
- Oh, come on, now. Please have some bread.
- Don't drink so much.
- Why?
- Because women don't like it.
- It's the best part of the woman, it is when you're drinking.
- It is not. They say drink too much is no good.
- Why not? That's the best part, it makes it better..."

"Jim, I understand you owned a plane at one time?

- Yeah, I had a [...] Comanche.
- Did you do much flying?
- Quite a bit.
- Where did you go?
- We used to go to Long Island.
- And, eh...
- Every Sunday to play golf.
- Oh, you went that far?
- [...]
- Did your wife like flying too?
- Very much loved to fly."

There are many opportunities for the laryngectomized to receive free speech lessons with the help of the American Cancer Society. Frequently, the laryngectomee clubs provide free lessons as do the Lost Chords of New Jersey.

When faced with any emergency in which first aid may be necessary, always remember to look for these clues: the laryngectomees' first aid booklet inside the car, the window sticker with its instructions for aiding the victim, the identification tag with its important medical information and phone number to call for further information.

Most important of all, check the neck. This will instantly identify a laryngectomee, and you can then render safe, effective first aid treatment. Although you may not have a laryngectomee living in your town or even near it, one or more may be injured in your town while driving through it. When confronted with an emergency, always remember to check the neck.

presented by
THE LOST CHORDS
OF NEW JERSEY

dedicated to
WILLIAM O. STEINER A.S.C.
by his friends and co-workers
of the motion picture industry

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Acknowledgment is gratefully made
to the following:

Passaic County Chapter
American Cancer Society
New Jersey Division, Inc.
Technical Advisors

Directors Guild of America

Local 644 IATSE
Directors of Photography
Camera Operators
and Assistants

Local 52 IATSE
Sound Technicians
Studio Mechanics

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F&B CECO, Inc. New York City
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Lighting Equipment

Music sound Track Service

DeLuxe Labs, New York City
Color Processing

Transcript: Julie Manuel