

Taking Sputum Samples from Small Children with Cystic Fibrosis:

a Matter of Cooperation

These three short videos of children undergoing tracheal suction show challenges for children and parents and may help you to form an idea of how parents can support their child to cope with the procedure of tracheal suction.

If you watch the videos with a child who is older than the children in the videos, it is very important not to push the child (e.g. never say "look how cool he is – and he is much younger than you are!"). Only use the videos to show the child that he/she is not "the only one"! Use the videos for a talk about what is difficult and to make the child believe it is possible to learn how to cope.

Objectives

An important part of the disease control in Danish guidelines for care of patients with cystic fibrosis (CF) is a monthly sputum sample by tracheal suction. Coping to this unpleasant procedure in small children depends heavily on the support from parents and nurse. The objective of this study was to develop a tool to help parents and children to cope with tracheal suctioning.

Methods

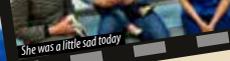
Three short videos showing how nurses perform tracheal suctioning to get a sputum sample from small children with cystic fibrosis were made. The videos were shown to and discussed with parents and children to help them identify their own challenges in coping with the procedure. The study was carried out in the outpatient clinic at the CF centre, Aarhus University Hospital.

Results

The videos are a useful tool to convince the parents, nurses and children from the age of about four years that the child will succeed in coping with tracheal suctioning. Parents as well as children find the videos useful in preparation for the procedure. Only very few children below the age of five years have not yet learned to cope.

16 months – Cooperation between parents and nurse

Emma



Emma is so young that it has to be her parents and the nurse who cooperate to make the procedure as easy as possible for her. As Emma is aware of what is going to happen from the very moment she gets to the consultation room, her parents have learned that the procedure has to be performed as quickly as possible. Her parents support her splendidly. They are very attentive and immediately after the procedure ready to comfort with toys and her dummy.

If the parents would not like to fixate their child, it is our job to talk with them and try to help them. Often it will be "educational" for the parents to try a tracheal suctioning themselves.

From the age of 2-4 years, children are able to understand simple explanations about why they need tracheal suction; as soon as you experience the very first sign of this, it is a matter of seizing the opportunity and begin to involve the child in the cooperation. You can start by offering simple options (e.g. do you want to sit with mum or dad today? / Am I going to count to 2 or 3 today? Never expect or ask for too much, but know that the child cooperates as good as possible. Always praise and try to build up confidence; take time afterwards to allow the child to react, talk about it and do something nice.

4½ years – Cooperation between child and nurse supported by parents

Jonas



For Jonas the most important thing still is to get tracheal suctioning over and done with as quickly as possible as he often loses courage as soon as he gets into the consultation room. He concentrates on breathing and visualizing and he needs support to focus to divert his anxiety. Before entering the consultation room, he has tested which nostril the nurse is going to use and is asked to plan what he is going to visualise. Jonas' mum gets on the backseat ready to support and hold his head and hands if necessary. The nurse is "talking him through" the procedure with short orders: "Now you get mum on the backseat", "then hold really tight onto the handlebars, like last time", "remember to breathe" and so on.

If the child do not manage so well, it will still be very important to praise and encourage him/her and have a talk about what was working and what we could work on for the next time.

It is crucial to "catch up" and make sure that the experience is never felt as a failure – even if the child is crying or was not able to cope as expected.

The challenge is to support and help the child until he/she has found a way to cope.

4½ years - Cooperation between child and nurse

Johan



Johan has already learned how to cope with the tracheal suctioning, so it only crosses his mind the short time it takes to get it over and done with. The sound of suctioning is still a "nasty sound" and the nurse has to count to as little as possible! All the times Johan has protested and has been fixated has caused no damage to his mind; on the contrary he is still a strong, lovely boy ready to face the challenges of life. Johan tells that he tried to think of how he could do the tracheal suctioning but nothing happened – and then suddenly he could.

Conclusion

Small children with CF can learn to cope with the unpleasant procedure of tracheal suctioning e.g. by watching and discussing exemplary videos of the tracheal suctioning procedure.

The videos can be seen at:

www.cf.en.auh.dk

or at the e-poster