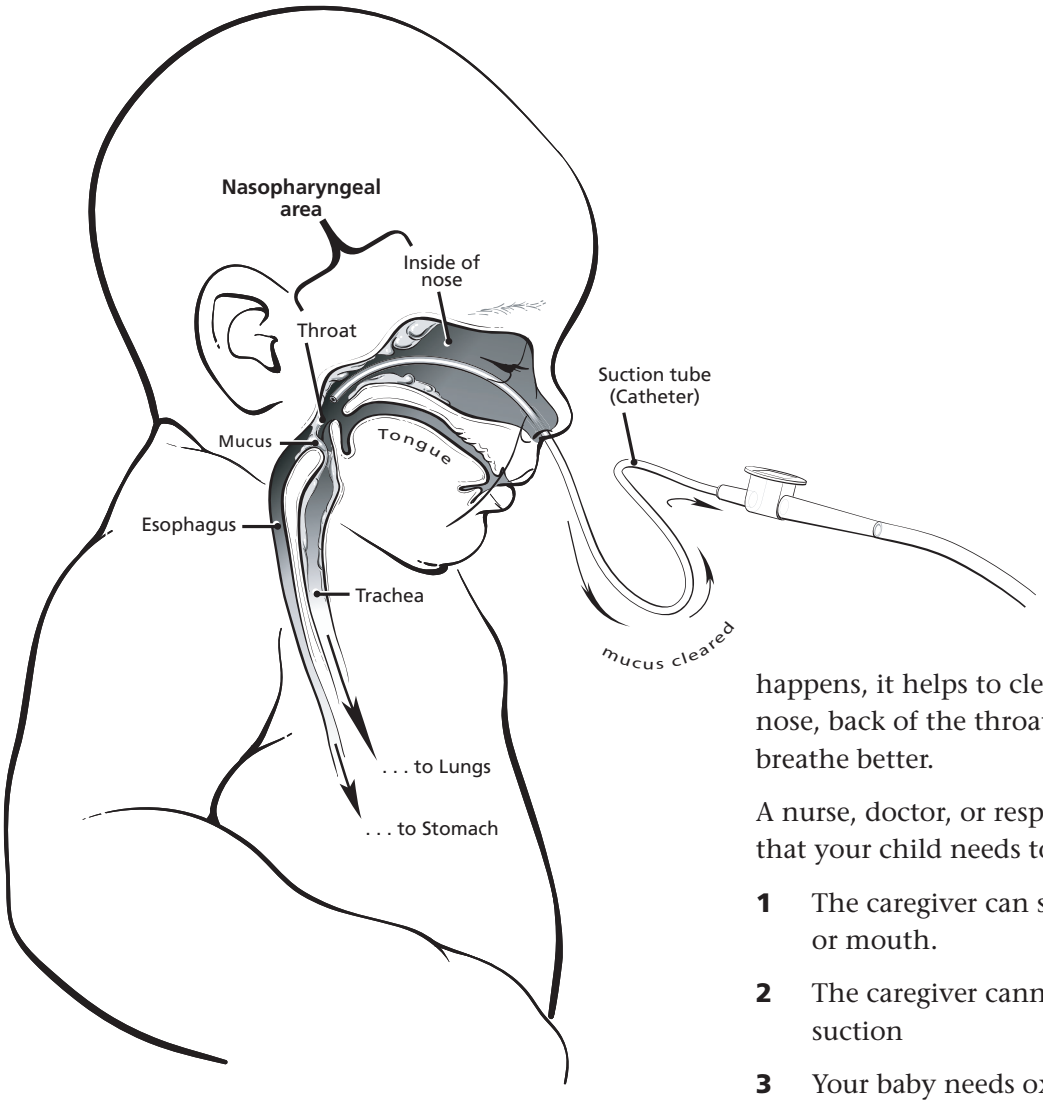
Let's Talk About...

Nasopharyngeal (NP) Suctioning



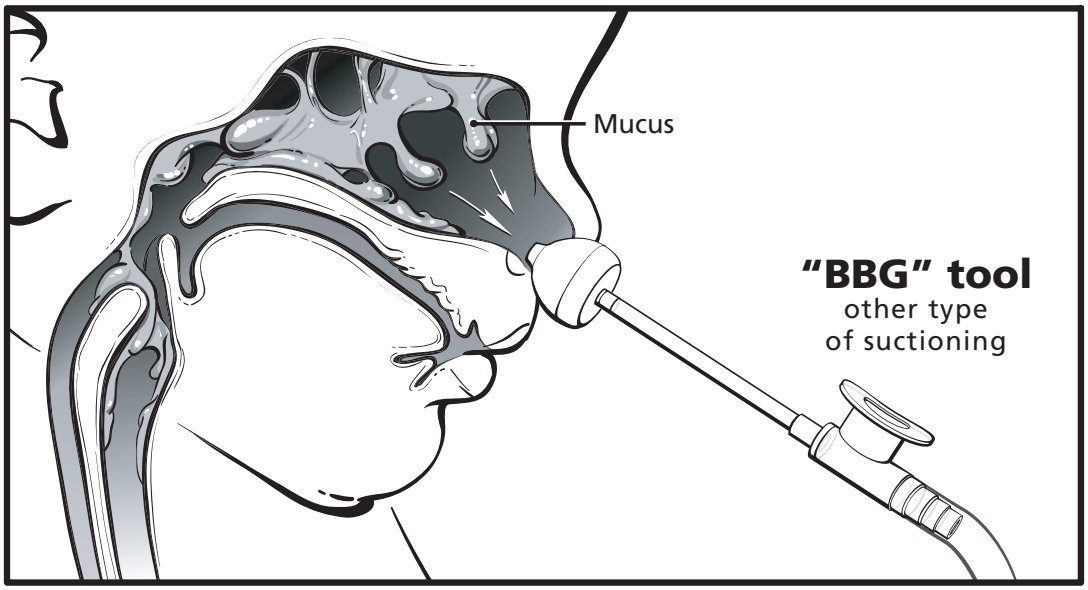
What is NP suctioning?

Nasopharyngeal (pronounced nay-zo-fair-ingee-all), or **NP suctioning** is a way to remove extra mucus from the back of the throat (nasopharyngeal refers to the nose and upper part of the throat). Many problems can cause too much mucus to collect in the back of the throat nose or mouth. Some of these are bronchiolitis or RSV, influenza, pneumonia, or problems with the nerves or brain that prevent coughing or swallowing. When this happens, it helps to clear mucus from your child's nose, back of the throat, and/or mouth so he can breathe better.

A nurse, doctor, or respiratory therapist may decide that your child needs to be NP suctioned if:

1. The caregiver can see mucus in his nose or mouth.
2. The caregiver cannot clear mucus with a bulb suction
3. Your baby needs oxygen, or more oxygen than usual.
4. Doctors, nurses, and respiratory therapists listen to your baby's chest and hear sounds that mean there is too much mucus in the nose or mouth.
5. Your baby is working hard to breathe, breathing too fast, using more muscles to breathe, or cannot breathe and eat at the same time.

When your baby needs to be NP suctioned, the nurse or respiratory therapist will use a small tube. This tube is attached to a "suction" device. The



caregiver will gently put a small tube in your baby's nose until it touches the back of his throat. Then the caregiver will slowly pull the tube out of your baby's nose while sucking out the mucus. This will usually make your baby cough. The coughing helps bring up the mucus to the back of the throat so it can be taken out. The caregiver may put drops of saltwater in your baby's nose to help loosen the mucus and lubricate inside the nose. They may need to suction each side of the nose several times to get all the mucus out. After your baby's nose is clear then they may suction your baby's mouth too.

Are there any problems with NP suctioning?

Sometimes babies who need frequent NP suctioning have swelling inside the nose or have a mild nosebleed. If this happens, a smaller tube or a different tool called a "BBG" can be used until the bleeding or swelling goes away. If your child is suctioned within a half hour after eating, he may throw up.

How long will my baby need NP suctioning?

This depends on your child's illness, how sick he is, the amount and thickness of his mucus, and how well he responds to suctioning.

Can I NP suction my baby at home?

Sometimes parents are taught how to NP suction. Usually the baby stays in the hospital until his mucus can be managed with a suction bulb and breathing isn't difficult for him anymore.

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