

# The Airway Carnival: Combitube™

## Description:

The Combitube™ is a double-lumen tube with one blind end which functions as an esophageal obturator airway and the other as a standard cuffed ET tube. It is inserted blindly and "seals" the oral and nasal pharyngeal cavities.

## Indications:

- Ventilation in normal and abnormal airways
- Failed intubation
- Airway management in trapped patients

## Contraindications:

- Patients with intact gag reflexes
- Patients with known esophageal pathology
- Use in patients under 5 feet with standard Combitube™, under 4 feet with Combitube™ SA (small adult)

## Advantages:

- Requires minimal training
- May be more useful in non-fasted patients
- Successful passage and ventilation in many patients via esophageal route
- Portable, useful in remote setting
- Functions in either the trachea or esophagus

## Disadvantages:

- Mostly adult sizes
- Potential for esophageal trauma
- Problems maintaining seal in some patients

## Special Features:

- Techniques for intubation via Combitube™ have been described
- May be used electively to avoid intubation

## Tips for Success:

- Curve the distal tip ("Lipp maneuver") just prior to insertion
- Withdraw gently from the airway if ventilation is inadequate
- Use the laryngoscope

## Currently available devices:

For additional information contact [www.combitube.org](http://www.combitube.org)

**References:**

1. Frass M, Frenzer R, Rauscha F, et al. "Ventilation with the Esophageal Tracheal Combitube in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation." Critical Care Medicine 15:609, 1987.
2. American Society of Anesthesiologists Task Force on Management of the Difficult Airway. "Practice Guidelines for Management of the Difficult Airway." Anesthesiology 78:597, 1993.
3. Gaitini LA, Vaida SJ, Somri M, Fradis M. "Fiberoptic-guided Airway Exchange of the Esophageal-tracheal Combitube in Spontaneously Breathing versus Mechanically Ventilated Patients." Anesth Analg. 1999 Jan;88(1):193-6.
4. Gaitini LA, Vaida SJ, Mostafa S, Yanovski B, Croitoru M, Capdevila MD, Sabo E, Ben-David B, Benumof J. "The Combitube in Elective Surgery: A Report of 200 Cases." Anesthesiology. 2001 Jan; 94(1):79-82.