

FDA OKs silver-coated breathing tube

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The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved for marketing a breathing tube coated with silver to be used by patients on ventilators.

FDA officials said the thin silver coating is known to have antimicrobial properties, thereby reducing the risk that patients on ventilators will acquire pneumonia while in the hospital.

The Agento endotracheal tube is intended for patients who must rely on a ventilator to breathe for 24 hours or more. Such patients are at risk of exposure to hospital-acquired bacteria that can accumulate on the tube or pass through the tube into their lungs, eventually causing a lung infection known as ventilator-associated pneumonia, the FDA said.

Fifteen percent of the patients on ventilators develop VAP every year and 26,000 die from the infection, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The device is manufactured by C.R. Bard Inc. of Murray Hill, N.J.

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