

Tube Feedings

Introduction

Sometimes people with an illness or injury have trouble swallowing or are not alert enough to eat. When people cannot eat or cannot eat safely, a tube is placed in the body to give the needed nutrition. If a person is NOT allowed to eat or drink by mouth, it is called NPO (nothing by mouth).

Where Are These Feeding Tubes Placed?

1. **Nasogastric Tube (NG Tube)**
A tube is placed through either nostril of the nose. The NG tube passes through the nose, throat, and esophagus (tube leading to stomach) and rests in the stomach. A doctor puts in this tube.
2. **Gastrostomy Tube (G Tube)**
This tube is placed directly through the skin into the stomach. This tube is put in by a simple operation.
3. **Jejunostomy Tube (J Tube)**
A tube is placed directly through the skin into the intestines. This tube is put in by a simple operation.

TUBE FEEDING AND CARE

What Food Can Be Given Through A Tube?

Liquid foods are given through a tube. This liquid food is already prepared and comes in a can. It has all the nutrients the body needs to work. The dietitian and the doctor will decide how many calories are needed.

How Will Feedings Be Given?

There are two ways a tube feeding can be given:

1. Continuous feeding
2. Bolus (intermittent) feeding

Continuous Feeding

Liquid food is put into a bag. The bag is connected to the feeding tube in the person. The feeding is given to the person at a constant rate by a pump. In the beginning, most patients receive a continuous feeding. Once the body is used to taking liquid food, the feeding is changed to a BOLUS (intermittent) feeding.

Bolus (intermittent) Feeding

A bolus feeding is a large feeding given through the tube at a set time of day. The amount of liquid food given at each time depends on the calories needed. At first, these feedings may be given every 4 to 6 hours. They replace the continuous feedings. When a feeding is not being given, the tube can be plugged.

Bolus tube feedings are important in moving toward independence because they allow for:

- More freedom. The person will not be “hooked up” to a feeding pump.
- A more normal filling and emptying of the stomach, much like regular meals.

When Can Food Or Drink Be Taken By Mouth?

As a person becomes more alert or as swallowing problems decrease, he or she may begin eating solid food. The person will be watched closely each time food and drink are taken in through the mouth.

~IMPORTANT~

1. Do not give the person any food or drink until the team says it is safe.
2. Do not give the person any food or drink that is not allowed on the diet.

What Kind Of Food Can Be Eaten?

The dietitian and the speech pathologist work as a team to decide what foods and drinks the person should have. The dietitian decides what kinds of foods are needed for good nutrition. The speech pathologist looks at what foods are safe to swallow.

Each person is different. The type of diet may range from pureed foods (foods that have been put through a blender) to soft foods and ground meats with gravy. The dietitian and/or speech pathologist will give diet directions.

When Will The Tube Feedings Stop?

For a while, the person will be taking food both by the tube and by mouth. As more food is taken by mouth, less liquid food is given through the tube. Once the person is eating and drinking enough, the tube feeding can be stopped and the tube removed. The dietitian and nursing staff will make sure enough calories are eaten.



~REMEMBER~

Food restrictions are for the person's safety. All foods brought from home should be checked by staff to make sure they are safe to swallow.

How Often Are Tube Feedings Given?

A bolus tube feeding is usually given every 4 to 6 hours. How often it is given depends on calorie and water needs. If a tube feeding is needed for a long time, the times may be changed so feedings are given only during the daytime.

What Is Your Tube Feeding Schedule As Directed By Your Provider And Dietitian?

TIME	AMOUNT OF FEEDING
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Does The Person Get Water?

Along with the liquid food, most people are also given extra water through the tube. This is important for meeting the body's normal water needs. This extra water is called a WATER FLUSH. Water flushes are usually given every 6 hours or as directed by your provider and dietitian.

What Is Your Water Flush Schedule?

TIME	AMOUNT OF WATER
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Tube clogging:
Always rinse tubing with water after feeding
- Aspiration:
It is important to always sit in an upright position after eating

- Dehydration:
Watch the person closely for signs of dehydration:
-dry mouth
-decreased urination
- Remember to give water if it is ordered.
- If there are signs of dehydration, call your provider
- Diarrhea or constipation

Discuss possible change in type of feedings with doctor

- Increase fluids to decrease constipation
 - Refrigerate opened cans of feeding solution to prevent spoilage, a possible cause of diarrhea
 - Discard unused open cans of feeding solution after 24 hours
- Inadequate nutrition:
- Weigh the person to detect weight loss
 - Report to physician any intolerance to feedings

How To Give Bolus Tube Feedings With A Syringe

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Unclamp the tube or open the stopcock.
3. Check the residual.
 - Place a large syringe (50 ml) in the tube or stopcock.
 - Open the stopcock if there is one.
 - Slowly pull back the plunger on the syringe.

This lets the stomach contents flow into the syringe.

- Measure the stomach contents removed.

IF GREATER THAN 100ml: DO NOT GIVE FEEDING. PUSH STOMACH CONTENTS BACK INTO STOMACH. RECHECK IN 1 HOUR. IF STOMACH CONTENTS IS LESS THAN 100ml. START FEEDING.

IF STOMACH CONTENTS STILL GREATER THAN 100ml., RECHECK IN ONE HOUR. IF STOMACH CONTENTS STILL GREATER THAN 100ml. AFTER THE 3RD CHECK, DO NOT GIVE FEEDING. CALL YOUR DOCTOR FOR FURTHER DIRECTION.

4. Close the stopcock (or clamp the tube and remove the syringe).
5. Remove the plunger from the syringe.
6. Connect the syringe (without the plunger) to the stopcock.
7. Open the stopcock.
8. Pour the tube feeding into the syringe.
9. Allow the feeding to run in the tube by gravity.
10. Add more feeding as the syringe empties until the total amount is given.





11. IF IT IS TIME FOR EXTRA WATER (WATER FLUSH):

Pour all the water through the syringe to flush.

IF IT IS NOT TIME FOR EXTRA WATER:

Give 30 ml. (1oz) of water to flush the tube free of liquid food.

Always remember to give the water flush.

12. Close the stopcock (or clamp the tube).

13. Remove the syringe.

14. Tape the tube to the skin or bandage.

15. Rinse supplies with water.

Remember to stay in an upright position during the feeding and remain in an upright position for 15-30 minutes after the feeding.

How To Give Tube Feedings Using A Feeding Bag

1. Follow steps 1-4 in the directions for "How to give bolus tube feedings."

2. Hang feeding bag on something that allows the bag to be higher than the feeding tube.

3. Add the desired amount of feeding to the feeding bag and allow to flow through the and the tubing. When the feeding has reached the end of the tubing, clamp the tubing by using the roller clamp on the feeding bag.

4. Connect the tubing to the tube in the person's stomach or intestine.

5. Unclamp the roller clamp on the feeding bag tubing.

6. Allow the feeding to run in by gravity.

7. If it is time for extra water, pour the amount of water your doctor has told you to use into the bag and allow the water to flow in by gravity. This water is enough to be used as the flush for the feeding tube and it rinses the feeding bag system. If it is not time for extra water, pour about 50ml. of water into the bag and allow it to flow in the flush the feeding tube. This water also rinses the feeding bag system.

8. Clamp the feeding bag tubing.

9. Disconnect the feeding bag tubing from the tubing in the person's stomach or intestine.

10. Reclamp the feeding tube.

11. Tape the tubing to the skin or bandage the tubing area.

12. If the feeding bag and other supplies still contain a little of the feeding, re-rinse the feeding bag and syringe with water.

~REMEMBER~

Stay in an upright position during the feeding and remain in an upright position for 15 - 30 minutes after the feeding.

How To Care For A Feeding Tube

To care for a feeding tube in the abdomen

- Keep the tube free from clogs (open).
- Clean around the tube.

How Is The Tube Kept Open?

After a tube feeding:

Push 30ml (1oz) of water through the tube.

1. This rinses the tube

2. This stops liquid food from caking on the inside of the tube.

• If the tube clogs:

1. Try to move or dissolve the clog.

2. Push warm water back and forth through the tube with a syringe. You may also try a carbonated drink, such as soda.

~IMPORTANT~

Remember: Always flush the tube after a tube feeding to keep the tube unclogged.

How To Care For Skin Around The Tube

The skin around the tube must be kept clean and dry. While in the hospital, the staff will clean around the tube two or three times a day. A dry bandage is then taped around the tube for protection.

When the person leaves the hospital, the area around the tube can be cleaned with soap and water. If crusts develop around the tube, put a warm cloth on the area to loosen the crust.

~IMPORTANT~

Call the doctor if there are signs of infection at the tube site, such as:

- Redness
- Increased drainage
- Foul smell
- Tenderness
- Puffiness

