

# Troubleshooting problems with your feeding tube

Preventing problems is always best. Here are some things you can do to prevent problems with your feeding tube:

- Flush often with warm water. If using formula with fiber, flush more often.
- Flush before and after feeding.
- When on continuous feeding (pump feeding) flush every 4 to 6 hours (e.g. If you get up in the middle of the night and disconnect your pump).
- Flush before, between, and after medications.
- **If tubing is clogged:** Fill a syringe with warm water, attach to the feeding tube, push and pull plunger in and out until you feel it release, or use Declogging Enzyme Kit.



- **Button:** Clean out extension set with soap and water after each feeding. Use PEG brush to help with cleaning. Rinse very well and air dry.

## Troubleshooting problems with your feeding tube:

| Symptoms                                                                                                                | Possible problem                                                                                                       | Possible cause                                                                                                                                                                                      | Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coughing</li> <li>• Breathing changes or difficulties</li> </ul>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeding tube in lungs</li> <li>• Formula has gotten into the lungs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tube is in the wrong place</li> <li>• Not in upright position during feeding</li> <li>• Tracheostomy: Cuff not inflated for feeding</li> </ul>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stop feeding</li> <li>• Check tube placement and remove if needed</li> <li>• Sit upright and encourage coughing</li> <li>• Call nurse or doctor</li> <li>• If the patient has a tracheostomy, make sure the cuff is inflated during feeding and for 1 hour after feeding.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formula not flowing freely when attempting to give (infuse) formula</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeding tube is blocked or kinked</li> </ul>                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorrect flushing of feeding tube</li> <li>• Feeding tube is kinked or clamped</li> <li>• Incorrect administration of medications through tube</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check tube for closed clamp and unclamp</li> <li>• Follow instructions above to flush and unlog the tube</li> <li>• Replace the tube as needed</li> </ul>                                                                                                                            |

| Symptoms                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Possible problem                                                                                                     | Possible cause                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nausea or vomiting</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intolerance to formula</li> <li>Side effect of a medication</li> </ul>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Giving too much or at a rapid rate</li> <li>NJ tube moved from small bowel to stomach</li> <li>Secondary illness</li> </ul>                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stop feeding</li> <li>Call your nurse, dietitian, or doctor</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tube is dislodged</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accidental removal of tube</li> </ul>                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tension applied to tube</li> <li>Tube not properly secured</li> </ul>                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replace the tube as instructed</li> <li>Call your nurse, dietitian, or doctor</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diarrhea, cramping, bloating, large amount of formula left in the stomach</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intolerance to formula or feeding method</li> <li>Formula too cold</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amount, rate, or strength of formula too great</li> <li>Contamination of formula or supplies</li> <li>Side effect of antibiotic therapy or other medications</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Warm formula to room temperature before feeding</li> <li>Use clean technique when working with infusion formula</li> <li>Sit upright or raise the head of the bed at least 30 degrees for feeding</li> <li>Call your nurse, dietitian, or doctor</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Constipation</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short bowel action</li> </ul>                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not enough formula, fluids, fiber, or exercise</li> <li>Side effects of medication</li> </ul>                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If allowed, increase fluids and exercise</li> <li>Call your nurse, dietitian, or doctor</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dryness, discomfort, or odor coming from the mouth or throat</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discomfort</li> </ul>                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not drinking enough fluids by mouth</li> <li>Breathing through the mouth</li> <li>Decreased production of saliva</li> <li>Improper mouth care</li> </ul>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Breathe through the nose</li> <li>Clean mouth more often</li> <li>If allowed, suck on hard candy or ice chips, chew gum, or sip liquids</li> <li>Use oral swabs, available from your care team upon request</li> </ul>                                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decreased amount and dark-colored urine</li> <li>Dry mouth or lips</li> <li>Thirst</li> <li>Decreased tears</li> <li>Dry sunken eyes</li> <li>Weakness, lethargy</li> <li>Palpitations (irregular heartbeats)</li> <li>In infants, sunken skull bones (fontanel)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dehydration</li> </ul>                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not getting enough fluids</li> <li>Losing fluids from vomiting, diarrhea, excessive drainage, fever, sweating, or taking a diuretic (water pill)</li> </ul>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Call your nurse, dietitian, or doctor</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

| Symptoms                                                                                                                            | Possible problem                                                                                                                | Possible cause                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Swelling of feet or hands</li> <li>Shortness of breath</li> <li>Rapid weight gain</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fluid retention or overload</li> </ul>                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fluid retention</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Record weight as instructed</li> <li>Call your nurse, dietitian, or doctor</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skin irritation</li> </ul>                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allergic reaction to dressing materials</li> <li>Skin irritation or infection</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sensitivity to tape or dressing</li> <li>Failure to change tape or dressing and clean the skin as directed</li> </ul>                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perform daily care of the tube and stoma as directed</li> <li>Use water-soluble lubricant (such as KY jelly) on the irritated area. <b>DO NOT</b> use petroleum jelly (Vaseline).</li> <li>Contact care team for different tape and dressing options</li> <li>Request and use a moisture barrier paste or ointment</li> <li>Call your nurse, dietitian, or doctor</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fluid leaking around the tube</li> </ul>                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skin irritation</li> <li>Secondary infection</li> </ul>                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improper tube position</li> <li>Tube is too small</li> <li>Loose connections</li> <li>Tube not vented enough</li> <li>Not enough water in the balloon</li> <li>Tube is not correctly secured</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect skin with moisture barrier paste or ointment</li> <li>Check the tube size</li> <li>Check the amount of water in the balloon per doctor's orders</li> <li>Check all connections</li> <li>Vent or burp patient often using the tube</li> <li>Call your nurse, dietitian, or doctor</li> </ul>                                                                          |

## Need help or have questions?

Enteral Feeding Team: (385) 887-7356

Intermountain Homecare main numbers:

385-887-6000 or 800-527-1118

Notes

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