

## Let's Talk About...

# Homemade Blenderized diets for tube feeding

Children who are unable to fulfill their nutritional needs using traditional feeding methods are typically candidates for gastrostomy tube (g-tube) feeding. Although there are commercial feeding products, called enteral formula, some parents might choose to offer their child a homemade blenderized diet.

## What is a homemade blenderized tube feed diet?

A homemade blenderized diet for tube feeding is a carefully designed mixture of food. It may also contain some commercial formula. The mixture is blended into a liquid and fed into a g-tube with a syringe.

If you are considering a homemade blenderized tube feed diet for your child, call Nutrition Services at 801.662.1601. Then make an appointment with an outpatient registered dietitian nutritionist. The dietitian will ensure that the blenderized tube feed diet will meet your child's nutrition needs.

## How do I know when my child can start a homemade blenderized tube feed diet?

Before you can start a homemade blenderized tube feed diet, your child:

- Must have a g-tube with a 12-French diameter or bigger
- Must tolerate bolus feeds
- Be at least a year old
- Be medically stable

You also need a high-quality blender like a Vitamix® or Blendtec®. If you use a standard blender, you must strain the blended food before you feed your child. You must also have enough time and money to buy, prepare and blend foods for your child.

## What are the benefits of a homemade blenderized tube feed diet?

This type of tube feed may:

- Cost less than formula if your insurance doesn't cover your child's formula
- Be better tolerated than formula
- Give your child more variety
- Help with problems like constipation and reflux
- Be used along with formula



## What problems may happen with a homemade blenderized tube feed diet?

Blended food may cost more than formula if your insurance company covers your child's formula. Other problems may also occur when you feed your child blended food:

- It may clog the feeding tube.
- It can be difficult to give through a pump.
- It can only hang in a feeding bag for 2 hours in the temperature danger zone (40°F to 140°F).

- It can make your child sick if it has bacteria or is not prepared or stored properly.
- It may not be nutritionally complete.
- Your child’s insurance company may stop covering formula if you give your child a homemade blenderized tube feed diet.

## How do I keep food safe for a homemade blenderized tube feed diet?

You can learn more about safe food handling before blending food for your child’s feeding tube by visiting [FightBac.org](http://FightBac.org). Here are some guidelines to help keep you and your child safe:

- Wash your hands and sanitize surfaces carefully.
- Cook eggs and meats to their recommended temperatures. Use a thermometer for meats; don’t guess.
- Never thaw frozen food on the counter. Thaw in the fridge or under cold running water.
- If your child is vomiting and/or has diarrhea, use commercial formula. This prevents your child from getting sick from bacteria in the food.
- If you give your child continuous feedings, remember that food cannot sit in the temperature danger zone (40°F to 140°F) more than 2 hours (1 hour if the temperature is 90 degrees or above). Use ice packs to keep your child’s blend at a safe temperature.

## What happens if my child, who uses a homemade blenderized tube feed diet, needs to go to the hospital?

If your child is admitted to the hospital, the medical team will talk with you about continuing to use a homemade blenderized diet, or if you prefer, one of the commercial blenderized products carried by the hospital. Depending on your child’s medical condition, you may not always be able to use your homemade blenderized diet.

## What happens if my child’s medical team approves homemade blenderized feeds?

If the medical team decides your child can have a homemade blenderized tube feed diet, you will need to follow these steps:

- Sign a waiver that explains your rights and responsibilities.
- List a commercial formula when signing the waiver. This formula will be used if your child’s condition changes or there is no homemade blenderized food available.
- A nurse will administer all tube feedings.
- Provide the recipe for your child’s homemade blenderized tube feed diet. The recipe must include all foods and supplements. Your child’s dietitian will review the recipe and may recommend changes.
- Bring a 24-hour supply of your child’s blenderized formula to the formula room each day your child is in the hospital. You may not blend the food in your child’s hospital room.

## What happens if my child’s medical team does not approve homemade blenderized feeds?

Based on your child’s condition and needs, your medical team will work with you to choose the best product. The hospital has commercial formulas and commercial blenderized options.

## Notes

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