

# Troubleshooting problems with your feeding tube

## Flushing your feeding tube:

Flush (clean) your feeding tube with warm water:

- Before and after eating. If using a formula with fiber, flush more often.
- At least every 4 to 6 hours when pump (continuous) feeding.
- Whenever you disconnect the pump for any reason. For example, if you get up in the middle of the night to use the restroom.
- Before, between, and after taking medications.

## Care for the button by:

- Cleaning out the adaptor with soap and water after each feeding. Use a PEG brush to help with cleaning.
- Rinsing well with water and air-drying.

## How to clear a clog in the tube:

- Fill a syringe with water.
- Attach the syringe to the feeding tube.
- Push and pull the plunger in and out until you feel the release.

**OR**

- Use a declogging enzyme kit.

## 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>• Make sure tracheostomy cuff is inflated during feeding and for 1 hour after feeding.</li> </ul>

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Symptoms	Possible problem	Possible cause	Action
Formula not flowing freely when attempting to give (infuse) formula	Feeding tube is blocked or kinked	<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 unclog the tube</li> <li>• Replace the tube as needed</li> </ul>
Nausea or vomiting	<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>
Tube is dislodged	Accidental removal of tube	<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>
Diarrhea, cramping, bloating, large amount of formula left in the stomach	<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>
Constipation	Short bowel action	<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>
Dryness, discomfort, or odor coming from the mouth or throat	Discomfort	<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>

Continued....

Symptoms	Possible problem	Possible cause	Action
<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>	Dehydration	<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>	Call your nurse, dietitian, or doctor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swelling of feet or hands</li> <li>• Shortness of breath</li> <li>• Rapid weight gain</li> </ul>	Fluid retention or overload	Fluid retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Record weight as instructed</li> <li>• Call your nurse, dietitian, or doctor</li> </ul>
Skin irritation	<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. DO NOT 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>
Fluid leaking around the tube	<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>

