Giving a Feeding in an NG Tube (for adults)

If you are unable to eat, or can't eat enough food to meet your body's needs, a feeding tube is a way to provide nutrients to your body. You will be getting food through a feeding tube called a **nasogastric tube** or **NG tube**. This tube goes through your nose to your stomach.

Preparing for an NG tube feeding

Before working with the NG tube:

- Clean your hands with soap and water each time you work with your feeding tube.
- Make sure that the type of formula is correct and check the expiration date. If something is incorrect, call the Enteral Team and do not use the formula.

Flushing instructions:

- Flushing is the best way to keep your feeding tube working properly.
- You must flush or clear the feeding tube with warm water several times each day to keep it from clogging.
- Always flush at least twice a day and before, between, and after giving medications through the NG tube.
- Flush with 30 to 60 mL of warm tap water (use at least 20 to 30 mL between each medication).
- For your continuous feeding, flush at least every 4 to 6 hours. If the pump can be set to automatically flush, set it to flush every hour, unless instructed otherwise.

Follow the steps for your type of feeding:

☐ **Bolus or syringe feeding**
☐ **Gravity bag feeding**
☐ **Continuous feeding**

Steps for a bolus or syringe feeding:

1. Position yourself comfortably for the feeding. When possible, sit upright. If this is not possible, make sure your head is elevated on the bed during the feeding.
2. Flush the tube with 30 to 60 mL of warm water.
3. Remove the plunger from the large syringe and attach the syringe to the end of the feeding tube.
4. Add formula to the syringe. Let the feeding run in by gravity by raising the syringe above your stomach. Feeding takes about 15 to 20 minutes. If needed, use the plunger to apply slight pressure to administer the feeds.
5. When the feeding is complete, flush the tube with at least 30 to 60 mL of warm water.

Steps for a gravity bag feeding:

1. Position yourself comfortably for the feeding. When possible, sit upright. If this is not possible, make sure your head is elevated on the bed during the feeding.
2. Flush the tube with 30 to 60 mL of warm water.
3. Pour formula into the gravity bag, and prime the tubing with formula by opening the roller clamp.
4. Attach the gravity bag tubing to the NG tube.
5. If there is a clamp on your feeding tube, unclamp it. Let the feeding run in by gravity by raising the bag. The feeding rate may be adjusted by positioning the roller clamp on the tubing. The feeding may take up to 1 hour.
6. When the feeding is complete, flush the tube with 30 to 60 mL of water. Try not to put extra air into your stomach.
7. The feeding tube can be rinsed with warm water and used again for up to 24 hours.

Steps for a continuous feeding:

1. Set up the feeding by following the directions for the pump (see separate handout) and prime the tubing.
2. Place an amount of formula in the bag according to hang time:
   - ☐ **12 hours for any ready-to-feed formula**
   - ☐ **4 hours for any powdered formula**
   - ☐ **2 hours for any homemade blended formula**
3. Flush the tube every 4 to 6 hours using at least 30 to 60 mL of warm water.
4. Flush feeding tube with 30 to 60 mL of warm water.
5. Attach the feeding bag to the tube.
6. Start the pump per the manufacturer's directions.
7. Change the feeding bag every 24 hours.
8. Before adding fresh formula, pour out any remaining formula and rinse the bag with warm water.
9. Flush the feeding tube with 30 to 60 mL of warm water anytime the pump is turned off (for example, if you get up in the night and disconnect from the pump) and at the completion of the feeding.

How long can a feeding tube stay in?

- The feeding tube can be left in for 1 to 3 months or longer if your doctor says it's okay.
- Always check with your doctor before removing the tube.

Giving medication in your feeding tube:

Flush the tube with warm water before, between, and after giving each medication.

- Speak with your pharmacist if you are unsure which medications can be given through your feeding tube.
- Try to use liquid medication whenever possible. Use a small amount of water to thin out thick medications.
- Crush tablets into a fine powder and then mix with 20 to 30 mL of warm water. Let it dissolve as much as possible then draw up the medication solution into the syringe.
- Flush with 20 to 30 mL of warm water.
- Attach the syringe and give the medication.
- Flush with 30 to 60 mL of warm water.
- Repeat with each medication.

Do not give these through your feeding tube:

- Time-released capsules
- Digestive enzymes
- Enteric-coated tablets
- Biaxin (antibiotic)

General care

Mouth care

- Brush your teeth at least 2 times a day using a toothbrush and toothpaste.
- Rinse your mouth with mouthwash or water several times each day, if allowed.
- Use a lip balm if your lips are dry.
- If your doctor allows, suck on sugarless candy, hard candy, or chew gum.

Nose care

- Clean the edges of both nostrils at least once a day with a cotton swab moistened with warm water.
- Clean off any debris that accumulates on your tube.
- You may apply water-soluble lubricating jelly to the nostrils.
- Report any signs of redness, bleeding, or numbness to your nurse, doctor, or Enteral Team.

Skin care

- If your skin under the tape gets irritated, you may want to get a thin hydrocolloid dressing and place it on your face first. Then place the tube on that dressing, and tape the top of the tube or dressing. This will protect the skin. Call the Enteral Team to request this.

De-clogging the tube

Your NG tube may become clogged. Frequent flushing with warm water is the best way to prevent clogging. Always flush your tube before and after feeding, and before, between, and after each medication. If your tube becomes clogged, first check if the tube is kinked. If it is not, follow 1 of these 2 methods to "de-clog" (unclog) the tube:

Method 1: Flushing

- Fill a 60 mL syringe with warm water.
- Flush the tube working the plunger in and out.
- Repeat 4 to 5 times until the tube flushes easily.

Method 2: Using a de-clogging enzyme

- Use the "De-clogging Enzyme Kit" provided by the Enteral Team.
- Slowly push this solution into the tube with the syringe.
- Let it sit for 1 to 2 hours.
- Flush with 60 mL of warm water in a large syringe. You may need to work the plunger in and out gently.

If you are unable to de-clog your tube, call the Enteral Team or your doctor.

What do I do if there is a problem?

The most common problem with NG tubes is that the tube is not positioned properly. The tube may be coiled in the back of the throat, or it may not be all the way into the stomach.

If you begin to vomit, cough, or gag:

1. **Stop the feeding.**
2. **Call your doctor or the Enteral Team.**

If your caretaker notices that you stop breathing or turn blue, they need to call 911.

If your tube comes out, follow the instructions from your doctor.

If your tube cracks or breaks or has other damage, call your doctor immediately.

Need help or have questions?

Enteral Team
(385) 887-7356

Intermountain Homecare Main Number
(385) 887-6000 | (800) 527-1118 (Toll Free)

Questions for my Enteral Team or my doctor:

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