

# Giving an Enteral Feeding in a Gastrostomy Tube (for adults)

If you are unable to eat, or unable to 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 **gastrostomy tube (G-tube, GT, or PEG tube)**.

## Preparing for a G-tube feeding

Before working with the G-tube:

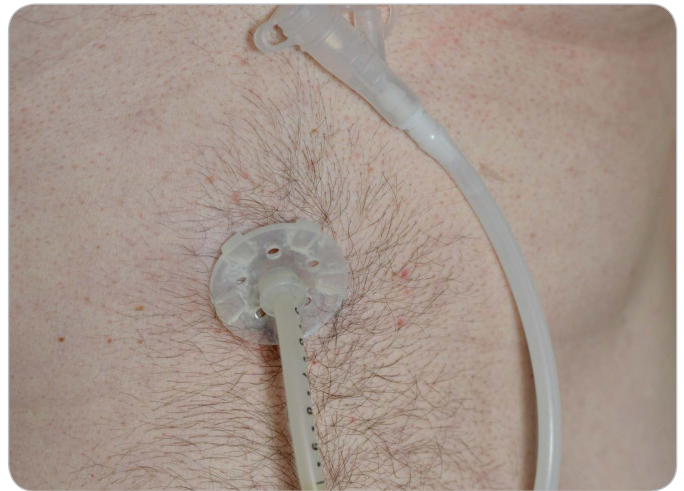
- Clean your hands with soap and water.
- Verify the type of formula is correct and check the expiration date. If something is incorrect, call the Enteral Team and do not use the formula.
- Flush (clear) the feeding tube with warm water to keep it from clogging.

**Check a box below next to the type of feeding you will use.** Then, find and follow the instructions in this handout.

- Bolus or syringe feeding
- Gravity bag feeding
- Continuous feeding (uses a pump)

## Steps for giving a bolus or syringe feeding

- 1 Position yourself comfortably for the feeding. Whenever 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 or extension.
- 4 Pour formula into the syringe.
- 5 If there is a clamp on your feeding tube, unclamp it. 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 start the feeding then remove the plunger.
- 6 When the feeding is complete, flush with at least 30 to 60 mL of warm water.



## Steps for a gravity bag feeding

- 1 Position yourself comfortably for the feeding. Whenever 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 feeding tube or extension.
- 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 an hour.
- 6 The feeding bag should be rinsed with warm water and used again for up to 24 hours.
- 7 When the feeding is complete, flush with 30 to 60 mL of water. Try not to put extra air into the stomach.

## Steps for giving a continuous feeding

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

## De-clogging your tube

Your G-tube may become clogged. Frequent flushing with warm water is the best way to prevent clogging. Always flush your tube before and after feeding, before, between, and after each medication, and any time the pump is stopped for any reason (for example, when going to the restroom). If your feeding tube clogs, 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

- 1 Fill a 60 mL syringe with warm water.
- 2 Flush the tube working the plunger in and out.
- 3 Repeat 4 to 5 times until the tube flushes easily.
- 4 If you are unable to de-clog the tube, call the Enteral Team.

### Method 2: Using a de-clogging enzyme

- 1 Use the “De-clogging Enzyme Kit” provided by the Enteral Team.
- 2 Slowly push this solution into the tube with a syringe.
- 3 Let it sit for 1 to 2 hours.
- 4 Flush with 60 mL of warm water in a large syringe. You may need to work the plunger in and out gently.
- 5 If you are unable to de-clog the tube, call the Enteral Team or your doctor.

## Giving medication

- Always flush the tube with warm water before, between, and after each medication.
- Always try to use liquid medication. If the medication is thick, add a small amount of water or other liquid as instructed to thin it out.
- If medication is in a tablet form, crush the tablet into a fine powder, mix with warm water, and dissolve it as much as possible.
- Flush the tube with warm water.
- Attach the syringe containing the medication and give it.
- Flush with warm water.
- Repeat with each medication.

**Do not give these medications through your feeding tube** (discuss alternatives with your pharmacist):

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

## Cleaning the extensions (for button tubes)

You need to clean the extension after each use with warm water. Rinse well and air dry. If needed, request a “PEG brush” (or equivalent) from the Enteral Team to clean the extension.

## Venting

Venting through the tube will relieve bloating and help stop leakage around the tube. This is done by placing an empty syringe, without the plunger, on the end of the tube and letting the air be released. Sometimes a small amount of gastric juice may come out, which is normal.

**If the tube comes out**, wash it off with soap and water and place it back in the hole in your abdomen (belly) as soon as possible. If you can't get the original tube back in, use the back-up catheter or tube. Follow the instructions from your doctor. Tape the tube in place. Contact your doctor. **Do not use the tube until your doctor has checked it.**

## General Care

### Mouth care

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

## Site (stoma) care

Site care should be done according to your doctor's guidelines.

- After the site has healed, clean it at least daily with soap and water, then rinse and dry. A small amount of drainage around the tube is normal.
- Change your G-tube dressing anytime it gets wet.
- You may remove your dressing to shower. Apply a new dressing when finished.
- Tape your tube properly to prevent complications in the area. Call the Enteral Team for instructions.
- Do not go swimming or soak in a hot tub or bathtub unless your doctor says it's okay.

**Note:** The skin around the tube may be pink or red, this is normal. **If the redness gets larger, has pus drainage, or feels hot, call your doctor. If your tube cracks, breaks, or is accidentally damaged, notify your doctor as soon as possible.** Once your site has healed, you may no longer need a dressing.

### Need help or have questions?

#### Enteral Team

(385) 887-7356

#### Intermountain Homecare Main Number

(385) 887-6000 | (800) 527-1118 (Toll Free)

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