

Nasogastric Tube Feedings

Why do I need a feeding tube?

A nasogastric feeding tube is used to give fluids, tube feeds, and medicine to people who cannot take them by mouth. The tube is placed through your nose into your stomach. An x-ray is taken to make sure that the tube is in your stomach. The feeding tube is often used up to a few weeks.

My Tube Feed and Hydration Plan

Tube Feed Formula _____
Amount of Tube Feed Formula Needed Daily You need a total of _____ cans or _____ ounces per day This will provide _____ calories, _____ grams (g) of protein and _____ milliliters (mL) of water
Tube Feed Schedule _____ _____ _____ _____
Extra Water Flushes Needed You need a total of _____ mL of water per day to stay hydrated (equal to _____ fluid ounces and _____ cups) Your goal tube feeds give you _____ mL of water per day You also need _____ mL of water per day (equal to _____ fluid ounces and _____ cups)
Water Flush Schedule _____ _____ _____ _____

How do I give tube feedings?

Gravity tube feedings are given many times a day, a few hours apart and are given by a feeding bag over 30 minutes or less. The feeding bag hangs above your head and the formula drips in. Bolus (syringe) tube feeds may be given many times a day, a few hours apart and are given through a syringe over 15-30 minutes.

Gravity Tube Feedings

1. Wash your hands with soap and water. Dry them with a clean towel.
2. Use room temperature formula. Very cold formula may cause stomach pain.
3. Getting the feeding ready: You will either use a ready-made formula or one that needs to be made from a powder.

Ready-made:

- Wash and dry the lid of the can with a clean towel.
- Only open cans of formula that you will need for the feeding.
- Shake the can before you open it.
- Place up to 8 hours' worth of formula into the bag.
- Leftover formula can be stored in the fridge with a cover.
- Throw away formula that has been open for more than 24 hours.

Formulas from powder:

- Follow the mixing instructions given to you by your healthcare provider.
- Place up to 4 hours' worth of formula into the bag.
- Leftover formula can be stored in the fridge with a cover.
- Throw away formula that has been open for more than 24 hours.

4. Prepare water flushes for before and after feedings as instructed by your healthcare provider.
5. Check the roller clamp to make sure that the tubing is pinched closed.
6. Pour the formula into the feeding bag. You can put up to 2 cans or 480 mL of formula into the feeding bag at a time. Close the lid on the feeding bag and hang the bag on a pole or hook that is at least 12 inches higher than your stomach.
7. Open the cap on the feeding tube. Using a syringe put water into your tube as instructed by your healthcare provider.
8. Connect the tubing from the feeding bag to the feeding tube.
9. During feedings sit up so that your shoulders are higher than your stomach. Sit in a chair or prop yourself up in bed or on the couch. Never lay flat on your back during feedings unless you were told to by your healthcare provider.
10. Unclamp the tubing coming from the feeding bag. Control the flow rate by using the roller clamp. A good rate to start at is 1-2 drips per second. Choose the speed of flow that feels right to you.
11. Once your feeding is finished clamp the tube. Remove the tubing from the feeding bag. Unhook the feeding from your feeding tube.

12. Flush your tube with at least 30 mL of warm water or as instructed by your healthcare provider. Depending on your fluid needs, you may need to put more water into the feeding bag. Allow it to flow into your feeding tube using the roller clamp to control speed.
13. Close the cap on your feeding tube.
14. Rinse the feeding bag and tubing with cool water. Swish with warm water and a small amount of liquid dishwashing soap. Rinse well and hang to dry. Use a new feeding bag set every 3 days.

Syringe Feedings

If you have been tolerating tube feedings by the gravity method, you may try the syringe method if you prefer.

1. Complete the steps 1-3 listed above.
2. Pull the plunger from the syringe. Open the cap on the feeding tube and place the tip of the syringe into the feeding tube.
3. Flush the feeding tube with 30 mL of warm water or as instructed by your healthcare provider.
4. Fill the syringe with formula and allow the formula to flow slowly. You may adjust the flow by gently pinching the feeding tube. Do not use the plunger of the syringe to force formula into the tube. This can cause pain and bloating. Repeat this step as many times as needed to complete your goal for this feeding. It will take about 4 full 60 mL syringes to complete 1 can of formula. It should take about 15

minutes to complete 1 can of formula.

5. After the feeding is complete, flush tube with 30 mL of warm water or as instructed by your healthcare provider.
6. After all the water has gone through the tube, place cap on the feeding tube.
7. Clean syringe with warm, soapy water. Allow to air dry completely between feedings.
8. Change the syringe each week.

Water Flushes

Your body needs enough fluid each day to stay hydrated. Your tube feeding formula gives you some fluids. The rest of your fluid will be met by drinking (if safe) or by doing water flushes through your feeding tube. Avoid force when flushing your feeding tube. If you are not feeling well and cannot tolerate your goal tube feeds, you will need more water through your tube to stay hydrated. You may not be getting enough fluid if you have: dizziness, dry mouth, dry lips, dark urine, or less urine than normal.

Giving Medicines

You can give medicines through the feeding tube if you are not able to swallow them. Follow these instructions:

1. Do not add medicine directly to the formula.
2. Give medicines one at a time. Do not mix together.
3. Flush the tube with 30 mL water before giving a medicine or as instructed by your healthcare

provider. If giving more than one medicine at a time, flush in between each one with 10 mL water.

4. Crush and dissolve pills in at least 30 mL water before flushing them through the tube. Never crush enteric-coated or time-release capsules. Sterilized water is the best method for dissolving medicine.
5. Flush the tube again with 30 mL water after giving the medicine, or as instructed by your healthcare provider.

When to Call

- You cannot unclog your tube. Sometimes a tube may clog. Medicines may cause clogs. It may clog if you are not flushing your tube with water often enough. This is not an emergency. First try to flush the tube with 30 mL of warm water. Never force fluid into the tube. If this does not unclog the tube call your doctor. If your tube clogs at night you can wait until morning to call.
- Your tube falls out. It is important that you call your doctor right away. Although this is not harmful to you, replacing the tube becomes harder or impossible the longer the tube is out.

- You gain or lose more than 2-3 pounds per week (for adults). Weigh yourself 3 times a week at the same time of day on the same scale. Early morning is best, after urinating. Keep a record of your weight. For children, if any weight loss occurs, please contact your child's doctor, nurse or registered dietitian-nutritionist.
- Nausea or upset stomach for more than 24 hours.
- Diarrhea (3 or more loose, watery bowel movements) for more than 2 days.
- Constipation (lack of bowel movement) for more than 5 days.
- Anything that causes you to stop giving tube feedings for more than one day.

Who to Call

If you are a UW Health patient and have more questions please contact UW Health at one of the phone numbers listed below. You can also visit our website at www.uwhealth.org/nutrition.

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH) can be reached at: **(608) 890-5500**.

Nutrition clinics for UW Medical Foundation (UWMF) can be reached at: **(608) 287-2770**.

The Spanish version of this *Health Facts for You* is #603s

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 10/2019 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#603