

Once you are home and ready to start using your feeding tube, use these guidelines to manage and care for your tube. You may be using your tube for all your nutrition or using it in addition to eating. Discuss your nutrition plan with your dietitian or care provider.

Check your weight weekly. If you have significant weight loss or weight gain, your tube feeding regimen may need to be adjusted. Notify your care provider.

## Basic Tips for Using Your Feeding Tube

- Always wash your hands with soap and water before touching or using the feeding tube.
- Look at the area around your tube for any redness, swelling, irritation or drainage. If the tube begins to drain any type of fluid or your skin becomes swollen, red or irritated, call your doctor.
- Always flush the feeding tube with 30mL of water before and after each feeding and each medication. Use of other liquids such as juices or carbonated beverages is not recommended as they may clog the tube.
- DO NOT use any feeding product past the expiration date or if the container is dented, rusted, or swollen.
- Unopened containers of tube feeding can be stored at room temperature in a clean and dry area. Opened containers should be covered and placed in the refrigerator. To avoid stomach cramping or pain, let refrigerated containers of formula stand at room temperature for at least 10-15 minutes before putting through your tube. If not used within 24 hours, they should be thrown away.
- Keep your head and chest raised higher than your stomach when feeding. Sit at about a 45-degree angle during a feeding. Avoid lying down for 30-60 minutes after a feeding.
- Wash your tube site daily with warm water and soap. Let dry.

## Medications via Your Tube

- Always flush your tube before and after all medications with at least 30mL of room temperature water.
- Speak with your provider or pharmacist to make sure all your medications are safe to use through a feeding tube.
- Choose liquids forms or crushable pill forms.
- If using pill form, use a pill crusher to crush one pill at a time. Combine with 30mL of water and flush down tube.
- Flush with 15mL of water between medications to prevent any clogging.

## Feeding Tube Troubleshooting

Problem	Possible Causes	What to do
Feeding will not run	Tubing may be kinked or clogged	Un-kink tubing. See below for de-clogging instructions.
Diarrhea	Various causes	Call your doctor
Cramping or bloating	Feeding may be too cold or administered too quickly	Allow feedings to come to room temperature before infusing. If you have gravity flow feedings, they should infuse over at least 30-60 minutes.
Drainage around tube	Various causes	It can be normal to have about a quarter-size area of tan drainage on dressing. If more than quarter-size amount, call your doctor. Keep area as clean as possible with soap and water. You may put a dressing around tube to absorb drainage.
Nausea/Vomiting	Feedings may be running too fast	Stop feeding for 60 minutes and see if you feel better. If you do, restart feeding. Activity, such as getting out of bed or walking may help. Sit up at a 45-degree angle (or higher). If these steps don't help, call your doctor.
The stitches break	Stretched skin	RELAX, if the stitches break, tape the tube down well and call your doctor to make arrangements to have stitches replaced if needed.
The tube falls out	Tube not secured	If the tube falls out during the first 4 weeks after it has been placed, cover the exit site (hole where the tube comes out) with gauze, go to the nearest emergency room. You will need to be seen immediately for replacement of the tube before the tube tract closes up.
Choking	Lying flat during feeding	Always sit up 45 degrees during and one hour after feeding. If you choke or cough up formula during your feeding, stop the feeding immediately. Call the doctor to report this incident.
Clogged feeding tube	Inadequate flushing or uncrushed medications	If you can see where the clog is in the tube, massage the tubing to try to break up the clot. In addition, using a syringe with warm water, gently push and pull the water back and forth with the syringe plunger. If you cannot unclog your feeding tube, call your doctor or go to the emergency room.
Dry mouth and lips	Unable to take anything by mouth	The following things may help prevent dryness: Lubricate dry lips with Chapstick or Vaseline. If allowed by your provider, rinse your mouth with water or mouthwash, suck on hard candy or chew sugarless gum. In addition, check with your provider to ensure you are getting enough hydration.

## Your Tube Feeding Plan (Bolus)

\*Adapted from Nestle Health Science (mytubefeeding.com)

**Tube Feeding Formula/Product:** \_\_\_\_\_

Give yourself \_\_\_\_\_ feedings per day.

Each feeding should be \_\_\_\_\_ ounces or \_\_\_\_\_ mL of formula. This amount is \_\_\_\_\_ containers of formula.

Before each feeding, flush your tube with \_\_\_\_\_ ounces or \_\_\_\_\_ mL of water using a 60 mL or larger syringe.

After each feeding, flush your tube with \_\_\_\_\_ ounces or \_\_\_\_\_ mL water, using a 60 mL or larger syringe

Time	Water Flush Before	Amount of Formula	Water Flush After
Additional water needed:			

## How to Give a Bolus or Syringe Feeding

Bolus (syringe) feedings are typically given over 5-15 minutes, multiple times per day (like meals), several hours apart.

### Steps:

- Gently shake the room-temperature formula and then open the carton you will need for the feeding.
- Before each feeding, flush your tube with 30-60mL of water.
- Remove the plunger from the syringe and insert the syringe tip into the feeding tube (you may need to twist to properly attach).
- If your tube has a clamp, open the clamp.
- Keep the syringe in the feeding tube and pour formula directly into the syringe until halfway full. Keep the syringe above the level of the tube to allow feeds to flow via gravity. Continue filling syringe until the amount prescribed has been given. (Go slowly- it can take ~10-20 minutes to administer 8oz. of formula.)
- Once the feeding is complete, flush the tube with at least 30mL of water.
- Pinch the tube or close the clamp, remove the syringe, and close the cap (and clamp, if there is one) on the feeding tube.
- Cover and store any leftover open formula in the refrigerator to prevent spoilage. Discard any formula after 24 hours.

## How to Give a Gravity Bag Feeding

A gravity feeding is usually given over 15-45 minutes, multiple times per day, several hours apart.

### Steps:

- Gently shake the room-temperature formula and then open the carton you will need for the feeding.
- Flush your tube with 30-60mL of water before the feeding.
- Check the bag tubing's roller clamp to ensure the tubing is pinched shut.
- Pour the formula into the gravity bag. Close the lid on the gravity bag and position the tip of the gravity bag tubing over a sink, trash can or container. Begin to slowly roll the roller clamp on the bag's tubing to allow the formula to flow down the tubing until the formula reaches the end of the tubing. Use the roller clamp to pinch tubing shut.
- Hang the bag on a pole or hook located at least 12 inches higher than your stomach.
- Pinch, bend or use the clamp to keep contents from leaking out of the feeding tube. Connect the feeding bag tubing to the feeding tube.
- Roll the gravity bag's roller clamp to open and allow the formula to flow down the tubing. You can change the formula's flow speed with the roller clamp. A good starting rate is 1-2 drops per second. The rate can be increased as comfort allows. One 8oz. carton of formula may take 15-20 minutes to drip into your feeding tube.
- Once the feeding is finished, clamp the feeding tube and disconnect the feeding bag.
- Flush the feeding tube with at least 30mL of water.
- Close the cap (and clamp if there is one) on the feeding tube.
- Cover and store any leftover open formula in the refrigerator to prevent spoilage. Discard any formula after 24 hours.

## Your Tube Feeding Plan (Pump)

\*Adapted from Nestle Health Science ([mytubefeeding.com](http://mytubefeeding.com))

**Tube Feeding Formula/Product:** \_\_\_\_\_

Your total volume of formula should be \_\_\_\_\_ containers of formula daily. This is equivalent to approximately \_\_\_\_\_ mL or \_\_\_\_\_ fluid ounces.

Your feeding should last from \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm to \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm.

Set your pump's flow rate to \_\_\_\_\_ mL/hr.

To ensure adequate hydration, you need a total of \_\_\_\_\_ fluid ounces or \_\_\_\_\_ mL of water each day in addition to your formula. One way to provide this additional water could be providing \_\_\_\_\_ mL or \_\_\_\_\_ fluid ounces of water \_\_\_\_\_ times per day.

## How to Give a Feeding with a Pump

Feeding by a pump may be used if you have a tube placed into your small intestine (J-tube) or if you are not tolerating larger amounts of feedings via your G-tube due to gastrointestinal distress. Tube feedings can be given by a pump all day and night (continuous feedings) or they can be provided for part of the day or night (intermittent feedings).

Some patients prefer to do their feedings only during the daytime. Others prefer to provide feeding at night when they are sleeping to avoid the need to be hooked up to the pump during daytime hours. If providing feeds at night, it is important to raise your head above the bed by at least 30 degrees to prevent aspiration. (Can consider a wedge pillow to lift your head).

### Steps:

- Gently shake the room-temperature formula container, then open the can or carton of formula you need for your feeding.
- Flush the feeding tube with at least 30mL of water before the feeding.
- If you are using auto water flushes (programmed flushes via the pump), put enough water for 8-12 hours of feeding into the water flush bag.
- Pour the formula into the feeding bag. Only pour enough formula for 8-12 hours of feeding at a time. To maintain safety and avoid any concerns with infection, feeds should not hang longer than 8-12 hours.
- Prime the pump to avoid air being placed into the stomach: Turn the pump on to allow the feed to run through the tubing until it is almost at the end of the tubing. Shut off the pump.
- Insert tubing from the pump into your feeding tube.
- Set the pump to initiate feeding.
- If feeding is continuous, once the feeding bag is almost empty, refill it with another 8-12 hours of formula. Refill the water bag as needed as well.
- Once feeds finish, flush the feeding tube with at least 30mL of water.
- Cover and store any opened formula in the refrigerator for up to 24 hours.

## Enteral Resources:



Picture Credit: Core Products, NelMed G-tube Holder



Picture Credit: Freearmcare.com



Picture Credit: EzyDose Pill Crusher on Amazon