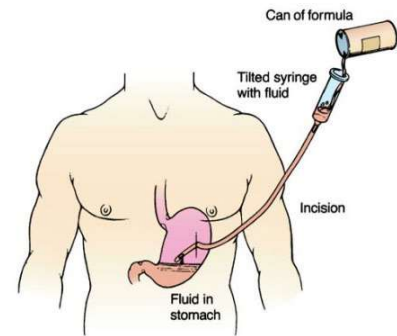


Your Gastrostomy Tube for Home Enteral Therapy

Your prescriber has recommended a **gastrostomy tube** for your enteral feedings. A gastrostomy tube is any tube that is inserted into the stomach. There are several different types and brands of gastrostomy tubes. Your prescriber or home care nurse can give you more specific information on the type being used.

The use and care of different kinds of gastrostomy tubes are generally the same.

This pamphlet was written to give you general information on the use and care of your gastrostomy tube. Additional information may be available from your p or your home care agency. This pamphlet should be used together with personal instruction by your home care nurse.



Bolus feeding through a gastrostomy tube.
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Basic Points: Administering Formula through Your Tube

There are a few important points to using your gastrostomy tube for formula feeding. Follow these recommendations to safely administer your formula:

- Monitor tube placement by marking the outside of the feeding tube and monitoring the external tube for changes in length;
- Sit upright in a chair or elevate the head of the bed to at least a 30 degree angle prior to administration of enteral feedings;
- Unless ordered by your prescriber, checking residual volumes is not recommended prior to administration of enteral feedings;
- Always flush with water thoroughly before and after administering a feeding, and before and after each medication administered;
- Use liquid medications whenever possible. Consult with our nurse or pharmacist before putting any medication through your enteral tube. Never mix your medication with enteral formula; and
- Do not put anything other than formula and medications as ordered by your prescriber in your feeding tube.

Tube Care

- Most gastrostomy tubes do very well without any type of dressing. Your nurse will teach you how to best cover and protect your tube site.
- Your tube may be held in place with adhesive tape. Remove this tape gently to prevent irritation to your skin.
- Wash the skin with soap and warm water. Be careful not to pull or push on the tube while the tape is removed.
- If your tube is secured by a plastic ring or anchor, gently lift it off the skin and cleanse underneath it.
- Rinse the skin with warm water and pat dry.
- The site should be cleaned as described above at least daily.

Applying New Tape to the Skin

- Cut two pieces of tape, each about three to four inches long.
- Use one length of tape to secure the tube to your skin a few inches away from the site.
- Place the second length of tape on the end of the gastrostomy tube, creating a “tab” by adhering both adhesive sides together.
- Use a safety pin to secure the end of the tube to a piece of clothing, to prevent tugging or pulling on the gastrostomy site. Use caution to avoid sticking the feeding tube when using a safety pin.
- When applying tape, make sure that you rotate tape sites, so that skin does not become irritated at one spot. Also, make sure that the tube does not get kinked.

Things to Watch For

- **The Tube Falls Out:** Cover the abdominal site with a clean gauze pad. The opening will begin to shrink right away so call your home care agency immediately to arrange placement of a new tube within a few hours. If replacement cannot be arranged quickly, ask your nurse for instructions.
- **The Tube Moves In or Out:** If you notice that your gastrostomy tube has moved out or in, contact the home care agency. They may evaluate the tube and reposition it if necessary.

- **The Tube is Clogged:** If you have difficulty flushing your tube, try using warm water. Gently pull back on an empty syringe, then try to instill warm water into the tube without using any excessive force.
- **The Skin At The Site Gets Red/Irritated:** If the skin becomes red, inflamed, or irritated, contact your home care nurse or prescriber for advice. Many will recommend a different cleansing procedure, and possibly an ointment for the area to soothe the skin and make you more comfortable.
- **There Is Leakage At The Tube Site:** If you notice leakage of either formula or gastric content, it is possible that the amount of formula being given is too much, or the rate is too fast. It may also be that the gastrostomy tube is too small. Notify your home care nurse or prescriber. They may need to evaluate the feeding schedule or tube size.