

What you need to know about tube feeding at home

*Appropriate for **all types** of tube feeding methods.*

Feeding position

- It is best not to give your feeds while lying flat. Sit in a chair or lay with your head raised to at least 30 degrees or on three pillows. Try to remain in this elevated position for 30-60 minutes after finishing a feed.
- If you start to cough, choke, or have difficulty breathing while feeding; stop the feed. Contact your health professional immediately.

Cleaning equipment

- Wash all equipment in warm, soapy water after use, rinse, and let air dry.

Storing equipment

- Unopened feeds should be stored at room temperature.
- Opened feeds must be stored in the fridge and returned to room temperature before use.
- Feeds must be discarded 24 hours after opening.
- Clean equipment should be stored at room temperature in a dry container.

Replacing equipment

- Syringes (used for water flushes, feeds, and medication) and gravity containers should be replaced as instructed by your health professional.
- Giving sets (purple tubes) should be replaced every 24 hours.

Tube position

- Your feeding tube has numbers/ markers running along it near the tube insertion site. Before each feed, ensure you check that the number/ marker hasn't changed. If it has, this may mean your feeding tube has moved position. If this is the case, contact your health professional for advice.
- If your tube comes out completely, it will need to be replaced. Present immediately to the Emergency Department at your local hospital.

Blocked tube

To prevent a blocked tube:

- Finely crush medications with a mortar and pestle or tablet crusher (both available from local pharmacy) before giving through the feeding tube.
- Always perform a water flush before and after giving feeds and medications using the start/ stop method.

Try the following steps if your tube becomes blocked:

- Check that the feeding tube is not kinked.
- Gently massage the tube with your fingers from the insertion site out.
- Do not insert any objects into the tube to attempt to unblock it.
- Try to flush the tube with warm water. Use a 20mL syringe with plunger as this can give more pressure than a 60mL one:
 1. Push the water gently, and with increasing pressure for 10-15 seconds.
 2. Pull back a few times for a few minutes.
 3. If unsuccessful, wait for 30 minutes, then repeat the push and pull steps.
- If your tube is still blocked, present to the Emergency Department at your local hospital.

Mouth cares

Follow good oral hygiene to help ease pain and keep your mouth clean:

- Use a soft toothbrush.
- Regularly use an alcohol-free mouthwash (e.g. salt and/or sodium bicarbonate mouthwash). Check with your health professional for suitable products and how to use them.
- Apply lip balm/ moisturiser to lips.
- Keep your mouth moist. Try sipping extra fluids or use dry mouth products or artificial saliva sprays which can be purchased from your local pharmacy.

Contact your doctor if:

- There is inflammation, swelling, pain, redness, oozing or leakage around your tube site.
- The following symptoms don't go away: nausea, stomach bloating, constipation, diarrhoea, vomiting or fevers.