Home Tube Feeding:
How to Troubleshoot and Manage Common Complications

Amy Long Carrera MS, RD, CNSC, CWCMS
Corporate Registered Dietitian
Objectives

- Tube Feeding Basics Review
- Common Complications
- Troubleshooting
- Solutions
Feeding Routes

Nasal

Gastric

Jejunal
Feeding Tubes

Nasal Tube (NG/NJ tube)
Feeding Tubes

Standard Gastrostomy (G-tube)
Feeding Tubes

Low Profile Gastrostomy (G-tube Button)
Feeding Tubes

Internal bumper

Balloon
Feeding Methods

Bolus
Feeding Methods

Gravity

Roller clamp
Feeding Methods

Pump
Common Complications

- Nausea and Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Skin Issues
- Clogged Feeding Tube
Why Prevent Complications?

Reduce Hospital Readmissions, ER Visits

Prevent Malnutrition

Improve Quality of Life

Silver HJ et al. J Parenter Enteral Nutr 2004
Nausea and Vomiting

Is the formula too fast?
Nausea and Vomiting

Slowing down the bolus feeding
Nausea and Vomiting

Slowing down the gravity feeding
Nausea and Vomiting

Slowing down the pump feeding
Nausea and Vomiting

Is the tube in the right place?

– Check the external length of the tube or
– Check the amount of water in the balloon
Nausea and Vomiting

Is it constipation?

– Check for last bowel movement
– Check abdomen for hardness/distension
Nausea and Vomiting

More tips for nausea and vomiting

- Sit upright or keep the head of the bed at 30 degrees
  - During and for at least 30 minutes after the feeding
- Use room-temperature formula
- Separate water flushes from the feeding

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Diarrhea

Is it the tube feeding?

• Too much too fast?
  – Slow it down

• Too concentrated?
  – Consider 1 or 1.2 kcal/mL

• Poor absorption?
  – Consider hydrolyzed formula
Diarrhea

Is it infection?

• Ask your doctor if you need a stool test
  – This is especially important if:
    • You have taken antibiotics in the last few months
    • You have had gastrointestinal infections in the past
Diarrhea

Is it medication?

• Some medications can cause loose stools
  – Antibiotics
  – Laxatives
  – Pro-motility agents
  – Liquid medications containing sorbitol
Diarrhea

More tips for diarrhea

- Hydration
- Probiotic supplements
  - Prevention of antibiotic-associated diarrhea
    - Lactobacillus rhamnosus GG (Culturelle)
    - Lactobacillus casei and acidophilus (Bio-K+)
    - Saccharomyces boulardii (Florastor)
- Fiber
  - Try a formula that contains fiber
  - Prebiotics
Constipation

Are you getting enough water?

- Your formula contains water but you may need to add extra water through your tube to meet your fluid needs.
Constipation

Are you getting enough water?

• Ask your doctor or dietitian how much additional water you should take every day
Constipation

Are you getting enough fiber?

- Soluble fiber
  - Draws water into colon to prevent hard stools
    - Pectin
    - Guar gum
    - Oat fiber

- Insoluble fiber
  - Adds bulk to speed transit time
    - Soy fiber
Skin Issues

Healthy Stoma Site
Leakage Around the Tube

Is the tube too loose?

- Check the external bolster or balloon volume
- Apply a skin protectant or moisture barrier
- Use a short-term dressing to absorb drainage
Pressure Necrosis

Is the tube too tight?

- Check the external bolster or balloon volume
Hypergranulation Tissue

Is something irritating your skin?

- Use only mild soap and water for daily cleaning
- Stabilize the tube to restrict movement
Bacterial or Yeast Infection

Is the skin too moist?

- Wash your hands before touching the skin
- Clean the site daily and keep it dry
Daily Skin Care Tips

1. Wash your hands
2. Rotate the tube ¼ turn (not J-tubes)
3. Check external bolster height
4. Secure the tube
5. Keep it clean and dry

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Clogged Feeding Tube

Preventing a Clogged Tube

• Flush the tube regularly with water
  – Every time you use it
  – Every few hours when not in use
Clogged Feeding Tube

Preventing a Clogged Tube

- Give medications separately from formula
  1. Stop the feeding and flush the tube with water
  2. Give each medication separately
  3. Flush your tube with water after each medication
Clogged Feeding Tube

Push warm water into your tube with a 60 mL syringe

Gently push and pull the plunger to loosen the clog
(Not with a J-tube)

Clamp your tube and let the water “soak” for 15 minutes

Try gently massaging the tubing with your fingertips
For More Information:

shieldhealthcare.com/nutrition

Tips for Home Tube Feeding Safety
Ensuring that patients/caregivers are successful with enteral nutrition is crucial to home tube feeding safety. Follow these tips to stay healthy at home.
Amy Long Carrera, MS, RD, CNSC, CW/CMS

Tube Feeding: How to Bolus/Syringe Feed Video
In this video, watch Shield HealthCare's Registered Dietitian's video about how to bolus/syringe feed. Bolus feeding is a type of feeding method.
Amy Long Carrera, MS, RD, CNSC, CW/CMS

Tube Feeding My Child: What is the Safest Way to Handle the Bag between Feedings?
Children on tube feeding are commonly fed via bolus method through a pump. What is the safest way to handle the bag between feedings?
Amy Long Carrera, MS, RD, CNSC, CW/CMS
Join us for a free educational webinar!

Webinar Topic:
Nutrition Management of Children with Developmental Disabilities

Janice Scott MS, RD, CSP, LD
Clinical Nutrition Manager
Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children

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Questions?

