Home Tube Feeding:
How to Troubleshoot and Manage Common Complications

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Introduction

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This information is intended for educational purposes.
Contact your healthcare professional about your treatment plan.
Objectives

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

Nasal

Gastric

Jejunal
Feeding Tubes

Nasogastric (NG tube)

Regular Gastrostomy (G-tube)

Low Profile Gastrostomy (G-tube Button)
Feeding Methods

- **Bolus**
- **Gravity**
- **Pump**
Common Tube Feeding 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

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 the 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
Diarrhea

Is it the tube feeding?

• Too much too fast?
  – Slow it down

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

• Poor absorption?
  – If malabsorption is suspected:
    • Consider a hydrolyzed or “pre-digested” 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
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
Checking the External Bolster

- Note the markings on the tube where the external bolster is sitting
- Slide the external bolster up or down to adjust
Checking Balloon Volume

1. Determine the amount the balloon should hold
2. Use a 10 mL syringe to deflate the balloon and note the amount.
3. Re-inflate with the correct amount of sterile water
   - Air can seep out and deflate balloon
   - Saline can clog the access port
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

- Wash your hands
- Rotate the tube ¼ turn (except for J-tubes)
- Check external bolster height
- Secure the tube
- Keep it clean and dry
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

To Clear the Clog at Home

Push warm water into your tube with a 60 mL syringe

Gently push and pull the plunger to loosen the clog

NOTE: Avoid pulling back on the plunger if you have a J-tube

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

Try gently massaging the tubing with your fingertips
Reference


This concludes our presentation.
Thank you for joining us.

For more information on tube feeding and nutrition:

- shieldhealthcare.com/community/nutrition
- youtube.com/shieldhealthcare

Contact Amy: rd@shieldhealthcare.com

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