

## FACT SHEET 12: NASOGASTRIC TUBE

### WHAT IS A NASOGASTRIC FEEDING TUBE?

A nasogastric (NG) feeding tube is a type of temporary feeding tube that is usually kept in place for weeks or months rather than years, and is used to give you your nutrition, water, and medications. It is a thin plastic tube, which is placed through your nose, it then goes down your throat and then into your stomach.

Once the NG feeding tube is in the right position a very small wire that is inside the tube will be taken out; the wire helps put the tube into the stomach. There is a clamp/clip at the end of the NG feeding tube, which will be shut when it is not in use.

The end of the feeding tube is usually taped to your cheek when it is not in use, to stop it from getting in your way, and to try to stop it being pulled out by accident.

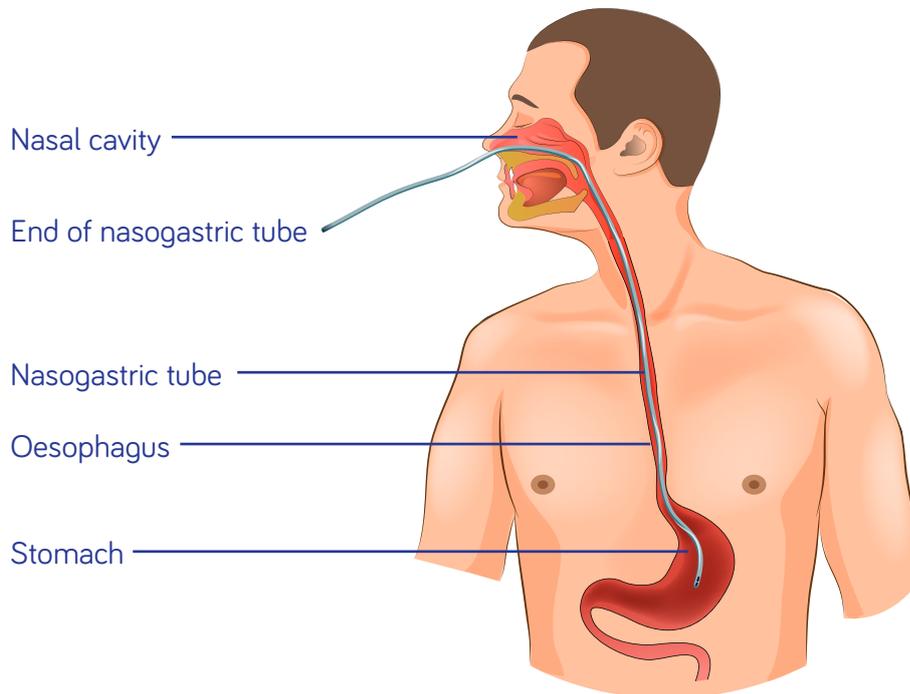


Your nutrition will be given in a specially prepared liquid feed, which can contain all the nutrients you need in a day. The liquid feed can be given by attaching a syringe to the end of your tube or by using an electronic feeding pump. Your dietitian will discuss these options with you and your Nutricia Homeward Nurse will show you how to use the tube.



It is important to flush the NG feeding tube with water before and after feed and medications have gone down it, to stop it from getting blocked.

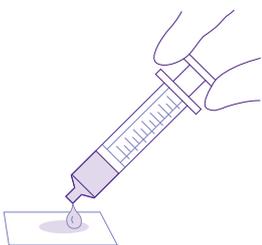
## HOW DO I CHECK THE POSITION OF MY TUBE (pH and measurement)



It is **very important** to always check the position of the NG feeding tube before using it. This is because the tube can move out of place. If this happens, the end that should be in your stomach could be in your lung. If the tube feed goes into your lungs it can cause you to cough violently, which can be very dangerous. Your healthcare professional will teach you how to check the position of the NG feeding tube before you leave hospital.

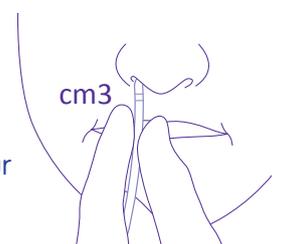
To check that the NG feeding tube is in the right position you must check the pH before each use:

- Always wash your hands thoroughly before doing anything with your tube. Check the handwashing guidelines to make sure you are washing them properly
- Use a 60ml syringe to draw a small amount of stomach fluids from the NG feeding tube — this is called an ‘aspirate’
- Place this fluid onto an unused strip of pH paper, it should hopefully show an acidic pH of less than 5, which means the tube is in the correct position in the stomach.



Every day you should also check and write down how long the NG feeding tube is:

- The tube is labelled in cm
- Check how long the NG feeding tube is by looking at the number by your nose, this will tell you the place of the tube, the number should stay the same each time you check it
- If this number changes, it may mean the NG feeding tube has moved position. Contact your nutrition nurse for advice if this happens.



## WHAT DO I DO IF I AM UNABLE TO GET ASPIRATE OR THE PH NUMBER IS TOO HIGH?

There can be different reasons why the pH sometimes reads high, but this does not always mean the tube is in the wrong place. There are some things you can try if the pH is reading too high, or you are unable to get an aspirate:

- Firstly, check how long the tube is, following the steps above. If this has changed a lot it may mean the tube has moved and is no longer in the stomach, you should contact a healthcare professional, e.g. nutrition nurse, if this is the case
- You can try lying on your left side for 10-20 minutes then try again to get stomach fluid (aspirate)
- If you have tried a few times and it hasn't worked, stop and leave it for 30 minutes, then try again. This may help
- If it's OK for you to have a drink, try drinking a little then try to get stomach fluid (aspirate) again afterwards.

If none of this works you will need to contact a healthcare professional, e.g. nutrition nurse, for advice. It might be the NG feeding tube has moved out of place and it may need to be put in again.

## WHAT DO I DO IF MY TUBE MOVES OUT OF PLACE?

It depends on where you live — some patients will need to go to hospital to have a new NG feeding tube placed. There will be a plan in place for you and your dietitian or Nutricia Homeward Nurse will be able to tell you what you would need to do.

If you can eat and drink, and the NG feeding tube is just to help you get a top up of nutrition, it won't be an emergency and you will be able to go to hospital the following day if the tube came out at night. If the NG feeding tube is the only way for you to get your nutrition, water and medication, then this is more of an emergency and you may need to go to hospital straight away.

## CAN I SWIM?

You can swim with an NG feeding tube in place, make sure the end of the tube is closed and the clip/clamp is shut — this will stop water getting in. Make sure the tape that is keeping the tube in place on your face is waterproof before going swimming.

It is very important to know that NG feeding tubes can move out of place so you will need to be careful and may need to limit some of your activities while you have the tube.

## CAN I DO SPORTS?

Having an NG feeding tube should not stop you from playing sports, but as the tube can easily move out place, rough and contact sports would not be recommended. Also, it would not be recommended to have a tube feed running when playing sport.