

# TUBE FEEDING AT HOME



# PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed to support patients with an enteral feeding tube, and their carers. It contains information and guidance on how to look after your feeding tube and enteral nutrition product, which may be referred to by your dietitian or nurse as a 'tube feed'. Additional advice literature is available for specific care requirements on request.

We recommend you follow the advice given by the managing healthcare professional about how much of the enteral nutrition product you need every day, and how much time you need to spend tube feeding in order to gain the maximum benefit.

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# STARTING ENTERAL TUBE FEEDING

Your healthcare professional has recommended enteral tube feeding for you or the person you care for.

It is completely natural to feel concerned or overwhelmed, however you will be fully supported by your local healthcare professional, as well as Nutricia Homeward – your allocated home enteral feeding service provider.

Support and advice is available from this specialist service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (including Bank Holidays).

## THE NUTRICIA HOMEWARD SERVICE

The Nutricia Homeward service supports adults, their families and carers, when they leave hospital by providing them with training for as long as needed, enabling them to manage their enteral tube feeding at home.

You will receive a welcome booklet outlining the Nutricia Homeward service. This booklet will also contain useful contact numbers for the Customer Service team, the Nutricia Homeward Enteral Nurse Specialists, and also the clinical advice line, which enables you to get advice from a nurse outside of normal office hours.

The Nutricia Homeward Enteral Nurse Specialists wear uniforms and carry identification at all times.

All delivery drivers carry identification badges.

# YOUR DETAILS

|  |         |             |                         |
|--|---------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Name:  |         |             |                         |
| Type of tube and size (FG or Ch):  |         |             |                         |
| Date of placement:   |         |             |                         |
| First date of replacement (if required):   |         |             |                         |
| Type of enteral nutrition product and amount:  |         |             |                         |
| Feeding schedule:  |         |             |                         |
| Product name:  | Volume: | Rate:       | Time:                   |
| <b>Contacts</b>  |         | <b>Name</b> | <b>Telephone number</b> |
| General Practitioner:  |         |             |                         |
| Community Nurse:   |         |             |                         |
| Hospital Doctor or Nurse:  |         |             |                         |
| Nutricia Homeward<br>Enteral Nurse Specialist:<br><small>Mon-Thurs 8.45am to 5.15pm<br/>Fri 8.45am to 4.00pm</small>   |         |             |                         |
| Dietitian:   |         |             |                         |
| Nutricia Homeward<br>Customer Service team:  |         |             |                         |
| Out of Hours Advice Line*:<br><small>Mon-Thurs 5.15pm to 8.45am<br/>Fri 4.00pm to Mon 8.45am &amp; Bank Holidays</small>   |         |             | 08457 623 636           |
| Emergency Hospital Tel No (for patients discharged from hospital following a gastrostomy insertion - information will be provided by the managing healthcare professional) |         |             |                         |

Nutricia Homeward  
Enteral Nurse Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Always contact your own GP or Community Nurse if you do not feel well, or if the problem is urgent.

\*West Midlands Out of Hours Advice Line 08457 623 603.

# CHECKING & STORING

Products may occasionally be damaged during transit or become contaminated if not stored correctly. Therefore, you need to check and store your enteral nutrition product and feeding equipment carefully.

## ▶ **Checking your enteral nutrition product**

- Check you have been given the correct enteral nutrition product. Make sure the name on the product is the same as the one prescribed for you by the managing healthcare professional/dietitian
- Check the enteral nutrition product is within the expiry date printed on the case and on the individual pack or bottle; check any foil seals are intact
- Always gently shake the bottle or pack before use
- Check the liquid looks smooth and does not appear to have 'curdled'. If there are signs of curdling, use a different bottle or pack with the same name printed on it – if you have concerns please contact the Customer Service team.

## ▶ **Storing your products and equipment**

- Equipment must be kept clean and could be damaged if kept at the wrong temperature
- Store unopened products and equipment in a cool, dry place
- Avoid placing products and equipment next to radiators or in direct sunlight
- In the winter months, if it is likely to freeze, do not place enteral nutrition products or feeding equipment in garden sheds, garages, or outbuildings
- Remember to order your enteral nutrition products by date so that you use the oldest product first
- Nutricia Homeward drivers will be happy to assist you with this (not applicable in residential/care homes)
- Contact the Customer Service team if you have enteral nutrition products that are no longer needed.

# SAFE HANDLING



## ► Hand washing

Effective hand washing will reduce the risk of infection.

**You will need:** soap, hot water, a clean dry towel.

1. Remove rings and watches
2. Wet your hands under running warm water and apply soap
3. Rub your palms vigorously together, making sure all skin areas are washed, paying particular attention to finger tips, thumbs, back of hands, wrists and between fingers
4. Rinse thoroughly with warm water to make sure all soap is removed
5. Always dry hands on a clean towel.

## ► Minimising contamination of the enteral nutrition product through safe handling

1. Careful handling of the enteral nutrition product and feeding equipment will also reduce bacteria spreading, and prevent complications such as vomiting and diarrhoea
2. To lower the risk of contamination, set up equipment using a clean work area. Avoid touching any internal part of the product container, giving set or feeding tube with your hands; avoid unnecessary handling of equipment
3. Ready made products can be hung for up to 24 hours from opening, providing they are handled using a clean technique. Any product that is decanted or poured, or made up from a powder, has a limited hanging time of no more than four hours
4. Containers must not be topped up once feeding has started; the total volume must be decanted at the start of the new feeding period
5. Dispose of any unused enteral nutrition product after the above time period
6. Change giving sets every 24 hours, or more frequently if advised by the managing healthcare professional
7. Before disposing of enteral feeding waste products you will need to check with the managing healthcare professional, local hospital or authority that it is acceptable to dispose of them in your normal household rubbish.



## ► **Correct positioning during and following feeding**

Correct positioning during and after enteral tube feeding will help your stomach settle and help prevent complications.

1. It is important to position yourself or the person you care for at an angle of  $45^{\circ}$  or greater whilst feeding, and for at least one hour after the feeding session has stopped
2. If a position of  $45^{\circ}$  cannot be maintained, you/they will need to be supported with pillows at a minimum angle of  $30^{\circ}$  – please discuss with the managing healthcare professional if you find this a challenge
3. If you have a tube that goes directly into the stomach via the abdomen please monitor for signs of leakage, pain, or discomfort, before, during or after feeding. If you do experience any of these symptoms please stop and contact the GP, Nutricia Homeward Enteral Nurse Specialist, or managing healthcare professional
4. In the very rare event that you or the person you care for starts to feel short of breath, stop feeding immediately and seek urgent medical advice, or call for an ambulance.

# THE FEEDING TUBE

It is important to check the position of the feeding tube to prevent complications. You will have been shown how to do this, however if you need support please contact the Nutricia Homeward Enteral Nurse Specialist or managing healthcare professional.

To keep the feeding tube in the best condition, and to avoid unnecessary replacement of the feeding tube, follow the instructions below.

## ► Prevent feeding tube blockages

Regular care and flushing of the feeding tube will help to prevent it becoming blocked.

**Equipment:** a 60ml enteral feeding syringe and water, type and volume as recommended by the managing healthcare professional.

1. Wash your hands before and after caring for the tube
2. If you have a nasogastric tube (a tube that enters the stomach via the nose) check the pH of gastric aspirate and check for signs that the tube might have moved (such as external tube length and secureness of the fixation tapes) to confirm the tube is correctly placed, as demonstrated to you by the managing healthcare professional

 **Never administer anything through a nasogastric tube until you are sure it is in the right place. If you are unable to confirm that the tube is in the correct position contact the Nutricia Homeward Enteral Nurse Specialist or managing healthcare professional for advice.**

3. Draw up recommended water with an enteral syringe and attach to the feeding tube. *If you have a feeding tube called a Button you may have been told to add an extension set*
4. Flush the tube with water (type and volume as recommended by the managing healthcare professional), before and after administration of the enteral nutrition product or medication, or every 4–6 hours if feeding is not in progress (except during the night or as recommended by the managing healthcare professional) to prevent tube blockage. *If you are using a Button tube, remember to detach the extension set after use*
5. If you suspect a **blockage** or you experience resistance when flushing the feeding tube, do not force water into it. Do not use the feeding tube and contact the Nutricia Homeward Enteral Nurse Specialist immediately.

# MEDICATION

Always follow the advice given by the GP and/or pharmacist. Administering medication correctly will avoid the feeding tube becoming blocked. Follow instructions below.

**Equipment:** a 60ml enteral syringe, medication, and water, type and volume as recommended by the managing healthcare professional.

1. Request medication from the GP in a liquid form where possible (if you are administering via the tube)
2. If medication is available only in tablet form, seek advice from your pharmacist
3. Wash your hands before and after giving medication
4. Check feeding tube position if applicable. If it is a nasogastric tube, check the pH of gastric aspirate and check for signs that the tube might have moved (such as external tube length and secureness of the fixation tapes) to confirm the tube is correctly placed
5. Flush the feeding tube with water (as recommended by the managing healthcare professional) using a 60ml enteral syringe. *If you have a feeding tube called a Button you may have been told to add an extension set*
6. Administer medication as prescribed by the GP using an enteral syringe
7. Catheter tip syringes must not be used to measure medication
8. If more than one medication is to be given at the same time, flush the tube between each medication using a 60ml enteral syringe and water (type and volume as recommended by the managing healthcare professional)
9. Flush the feeding tube with water (as recommended by the managing healthcare professional) using a 60ml enteral syringe. *If you are using a Button tube, remember to detach the extension set after use*
10. Do not administer over the counter medication without first consulting your GP
11. Contact the managing healthcare professional immediately if there is any reason you cannot take the medication or enteral nutrition product, or if they need to be delayed.

## ► Interactions

Enteral nutrition products may interact with some drugs. Always check with the pharmacist before administering any medication via a feeding tube.

Where possible administer prescribed medication during a break in the feeding regimen to minimise this.

The GP and Pharmacist will be able to provide you with guidance regarding drug/nutrient interactions. It is important to follow the instructions regarding administration and contact the GP if you have any questions or concerns regarding interactions or side effects.

# DAILY CARE

## ► Mouth care

It is important to maintain oral hygiene if you are using an enteral nutrition product for all or part of your nutrition; this will assist in keeping the mouth, teeth and gums clean and free from infection. The frequency and methods of mouth care will depend on the advice given by the Speech and Language Therapist, GP and dentist.

### **Difficulties managing mouth care**

**If you or the person you care for has a sore mouth, bleeding gums, blistered tongue or mouth, you must contact the dentist or GP for advice.**

## ► Skin care

Care of the skin around the feeding tube will reduce irritation and possible infections. For instructions on how to care for the skin refer to your tube leaflet.

### **Difficulties managing skin care**

**If the skin becomes sore or irritated, contact the nurse or GP.**

**Avoid using creams as they can damage the tube material and may lead to irritation of the skin and give rise to infection.**

# TUBE FEEDING METHODS

## ▶ Continuous or bolus feeding

Enteral nutrition products can be given continuously or in smaller amounts during the day (also called 'bolus feeding'). It will depend on the advice of the managing healthcare professional, your personal situation, the tube position and, where possible, personal preference.

**Continuous pump feeding:** You or the person you care for will receive the enteral nutrition product through a continuous drip using a feeding pump.

**Bolus feeding:** The enteral nutrition product will be delivered in smaller amounts throughout the day/night using a 60ml enteral syringe or a bolus feeding set.

**Only use the feeding method the managing healthcare professional has advised.**

## ▶ Pump feeding

- The speed of feeding can be programmed into the feeding pump and an alarm will sound when the pack or bottle is empty or if problems occur
- Ensure the feeding pump and stand are kept clean and in good working order by checking and cleaning as per the instruction booklet at regular intervals.

# FEEDING PUMP INSTRUCTIONS

## ► Follow the “Flocare feeding pump instructions”

**Equipment:** feeding pump, stand (drip, Z, or Go Frame with carry bag), giving set, feeding tube, 60ml enteral syringe, enteral nutrition product, recommended water.

1. Wash hands before and after operating pump, refer to ‘*Minimising Contamination of Feeding Through Safe Handling*’
2. Check the label of the enteral nutrition product to make sure you are using the correct product, refer to ‘*Checking your enteral nutrition product*’
3. Position yourself or the person you care for at 45° during and for at least one hour after tube feeding, refer to ‘*Comfort and Correct Positioning During and Following Tube Feeding*’
4. Check feeding tube position prior to administering anything down the tube. If it is a nasogastric tube, check the pH of gastric aspirate and check for signs that the tube might have moved (such as external tube length and secureness of the fixation tapes) to confirm the tube is correctly placed
5. Flush the feeding tube using a 60ml enteral syringe containing volume and type of water as recommended by the managing healthcare professional
6. Prepare and hang enteral nutrition product as demonstrated during training and follow the appropriate pump instructions
7. Programme the pump as shown in the relevant pump instruction booklet or pump leaflet
8. *If you are using a Button tube remove extension set once feeding regime complete.*

**Please Note:** If the pump alarm sounds refer to the pump troubleshooting guide in the pump instruction booklet or pump leaflet. If the pump continues to alarm contact the Nutricia Homeward Enteral Nurse Specialist or out of hours advice line.

## ► Parent/Carer support group

PINNT (Patients on Intravenous and Nasogastric Nutritional Therapy)

PO Box 3126, Christchurch, Dorset BH23 2XS

Email: [pinnt@dsl.pipex.com](mailto:pinnt@dsl.pipex.com)

Web: [www.pinnt.com](http://www.pinnt.com)



# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Bolus</b>                     | The proportion of food swallowed at one time  |
| <b>Bolus feeding</b>             | Gravity assisted delivery of an enteral nutrition product   |
| <b>Continuous feeding</b>        | Delivery of an enteral nutrition product continuously over a period of 8-24 hours   |
| <b>Enteral feeding</b>           | Being fed into the stomach or intestine   |
| <b>Enteral nutrition product</b> | A nutritional liquid, also referred to by healthcare professionals as an 'enteral feed' or 'tube feed', which is delivered through the enteral feeding tube |
| <b>Giving set</b>                | When using a pump to deliver an enteral nutrition product, use a giving set to connect the product to the feeding tube                                      |
| <b>pH</b>                        | The pH must be checked if nasogastric tube is fitted, and should read between 1-5.5   |

Please contact the Nutricia Homeward Enteral Nurse Specialist or managing healthcare professional for the most up to date version every year. Provided on behalf of Nutricia Ltd at the request of the NHS managing healthcare professional.

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SCC3340-02/18

Sponsored by an  
educational grant from

