

FACT SHEET 1: GENERAL INFORMATION — STARTING TUBE FEEDING

WHAT IS TUBE FEEDING?

A feeding tube can be used to deliver liquid food to your body through a flexible tube. It is a way of helping you get the nutrition that your body needs to function in every day life.

Tube feeds contains all the nutrients you need on a daily basis, including carbohydrates, protein, fats, vitamins, minerals, and water.

Here are some examples of what your tube feed might look like:



Your dietitian will make sure you receive the right one for you.

WHY DO I HAVE TO HAVE A TUBE?

There are lots of different reasons why you may need to have a feeding tube. Tube feeding may be used to make sure you get all the nutrition and water you need because of a medical condition, which means you're not able to have your nutrition through your mouth or maybe you are unable to swallow safely.

You may find you need a feeding tube even if you are still able to eat and drink. There are several reasons for this; it might be because you have a medical condition that means you burn energy very quickly, making it difficult to maintain a healthy weight, or a condition that means you just don't feel hungry and therefore don't eat enough to get all the nutrition you need. If this is the case you will have a feeding tube and it will be used to supplement your oral dietary intake.

There are lots of different types of medical nutrition your dietitian can prescribe for you to have through your feeding tube; all of these will provide the energy, protein, fluid, vitamins and minerals your body needs.

Your dietitian will explain the reasons why you need a feeding tube and will create a feeding plan with you. The dietitian will work with you to fit the feeding routine around your lifestyle, giving careful thought to your medical and nutritional requirements.

DOES TUBE FEEDING MEAN I HAVE TO STAY IN HOSPITAL?

No, just because you have your food through a tube doesn't mean you will have to stay in hospital. It may take a while to get used to having your food this way but you will get used to it. Before you go home with your feeding tube, you and those looking after you will be shown how to use and look after the feeding tube. There will be lots of people who will be able to give you information about your feeding routine and there are lots of leaflets available about how to care for the feeding tube.

This information is intended for patients who have been prescribed a tube feed by a healthcare professional.



You will also be given a list of contact numbers of healthcare professionals, such as your dietitian or your Nutricia Homeward Nurse, who you can get in touch with if you have any problems with the tube when you are at home. You will receive the equipment and tube feed that you will need to use with your feeding tube at home from Nutricia Homeward; this will be arranged by your dietitian.

There are also lots of groups, like PINNT (pinnt.com) — Patients on Intravenous and Nasogastric Nutrition Therapy — who will be there to answer questions and help support you.

IS TUBE FEEDING SAFE?

Providing you follow the instructions from your healthcare professionals about how to care for the tube and how to use your feeding tube, then tube feeding is safe.

The reason you and those looking after you are trained by your healthcare professional about how to use and care for your feeding tube before going home is so you can use it safely.

If you have any problems with your feeding tube that are not answered in your home enteral feeding booklet, then contact a healthcare professional for advice.

Sometimes a small number of people may experience some challenges when they first start to tube feed, but it is very important to remember that most of these challenges can be stopped and corrected very quickly. Speak to your Nutricia Homeward Nurse if you are worried.

WHEN WILL I HAVE MY TUBE FEED?

Your dietitian will talk to you about the best way and the best time for you to have your tube feed.



It could be a longer tube feed during the day or while you sleep overnight, or it might be a shorter tube feed through a syringe. Your dietitian will help you decide what will work best for you. If you want to make any changes at any time you need to talk to your dietitian before you do so.

WHEN CAN I START TUBE FEEDING?

Usually you will have to go into hospital to have a tube put in place and the doctors or nurses will tell you how long you need to stay there.

Once you are used to using the feeding tube, and the doctors and nurses are happy that you can look after your tube feed, you will be able to go home.

HOW WILL TUBE FEEDING HELP ME?

Because you are not able to eat food in the usual way, having your medical food through a tube will help your body get everything it needs.

HOW LONG CAN I HAVE A TUBE FOR?

You can have your food through a tube for as long as you need to. Some people only have food this way for a short time, while others have their food this way for the rest of their lives.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO GET USED TO?

When you start to have your food by a tube it can seem a bit strange, but you will soon get used to it. If you have any questions make sure you ask your dietitian, doctor or nurse, who will be able to explain things to you.

IF I FEEL BETTER, CAN I STOP TUBE FEEDING?

The doctors and dietitians who look after you will make any changes to the way you have your food to make sure you get the right food for you.

WHAT IF I WANT A DRINK BECAUSE I FEEL THIRSTY? WHAT CAN I HAVE TO DRINK?

Your dietitian will let you know if it's OK for you to drink. If it is, they will be able to tell you what you can have and how much. If you are getting these symptoms but are unable to have fluid by mouth, your dietitian may suggest having some extra fluid through the tube to help stay hydrated.

WHAT IF I GET HUNGRY? WILL I FEEL FULL?

When you have food through a tube you will still feel full up. If you do feel hungry talk to your dietitian, who will make sure you are getting the right amount of food you need. Your dietitian may also suggest altering the timings of your tube feeds to help prevent you from feeling hungry at points in the day.

HOW DO I LOOK AFTER THE TUBE?

It is important to look after your tube using the following care instructions.

- Always wash your hands before and after using your feeding tube.
- Always flush your feeding tube with water before and after each use.
- It is important for anyone who is touching the tube to always follow hand-washing instructions for clean hands.
- It is important that anyone handling the feed or equipment is not sick, have an upset stomach or diarrhoea.
- Anyone touching the tube should have any cuts covered with a plaster.
- It is important that your tube and equipment does not touch unwashed hands or surfaces.
- Check your feeding tube daily — is the feeding tube clean around your skin? — is the skin a healthy colour?
- Your nutrition nurse will show you how to unblock your feeding tube but if it becomes blocked and you are unable to unblock it using the information your nutrition nurse has given you please contact your nutrition team or your Nutricia Homeward Nurse who will advise you what to do next.
- If your feeding tube is no longer in your tummy, please contact the nutrition team as soon as possible.

WHAT DO I DO IF THE TUBE FEED BOTTLE LEAKS?

If a bottle of feed leaks before you start to tube feed, throw it away by pouring the contents down the sink and putting the container in your recycling bin. In its place use a sealed bottle of feed.

If the bottle of feed begins to leak during tube feeding, pause your feed using the correct buttons on the pump, disconnect the tube feed and throw away the leaking bottle; open a new bottle and connect it to the giving set in the usual way. The pump will have recorded how much feed you have already had and will continue to provide your programmed dose. Let the Nutricia Homeward Customer Service team know as soon as you can to ensure you do not run out of tube feed.

ANY TIPS ON STORING EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES?

- You need to keep your bottles of tube feed in a cool, dry place, away from sunlight. Always check the date on the bottle before opening and give the bottle a good shake.
- Make sure you use up the old tube feed before opening a new box. The Nutricia Homeward delivery driver can help by stacking the new boxes at the back.
- Ensure that giving sets are thrown away after 24 hours.
- Every day, during a rest period, unplug and wipe down the pump with sterile wipes.
- If you are using reusable syringes these need to be thoroughly cleaned as per the instructions with warm soapy water, then air dried after each use.
- Reusable syringes should be used and should be thrown away if they are damaged. Reusable syringes should not be used for longer than a week.

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All products mentioned are Foods for Special Medical Purposes for the dietary management of disease related malnutrition and must be used under medical supervision.

Nutricia Ltd, White Horse Business Park, Trowbridge, Wiltshire BA14 0XQ

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