Your Gastrostomy Tube for Home Enteral Therapy

Your doctor has recommended a **gastrostomy tube** for your enteral feedings. A gastrostomy tube is any tube that is inserted into the stomach. There are several different types and brands of gastrostomy tubes. Your doctor or home care nurse can give you more specific information on the type being used.

Your gastrostomy tube may be a conventional one, which can be removed and reinserted if necessary. If you have a **PEG (Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastrostomy) Tube**, then you have a type which cannot be removed and reinserted, except by a physician in the hospital.

Other than this difference, the use and care of different kinds of gastrostomy tubes are generally the same.

Some patients, instead of having a gastrostomy tube (into the stomach), have a **jejunostomy tube**. These tubes have their tip in the small intestines instead of the stomach. The tube leaves the body at about the same place as a gastrostomy tube would. The only difference in their care is in the type of formula you would use, and that you do not need to check for residual volume.

This pamphlet has been written to give you general information on the use and care of your gastrostomy tube. Additional information may be available from your doctor, or your home care agency. This pamphlet should be used together with personal instruction by your home care nurse.

**Basic Points: Administering Formula Through Your Tube**

There are a few important points to using your gastrostomy tube for formula feeding. Follow the following recommendations to safely administer your formula.

- Always check the placement of your tube before using it. Use a stethoscope as taught by your nurse to make sure the tube is in the correct place.
- If ordered by your physician, check the residual volume before administering the formula. Your stomach should be almost empty before you add more formula at the next feeding.
- Always flush with water thoroughly before and after administering a feeding.
Use liquid medications whenever possible. Consult with our nurse or pharmacist before putting any medication through your enteral tube. Never mix your medication with enteral formula.

Tube Care

- Most gastrostomy and jejunostomy tubes do very well without any type of dressing. Your nurse will teach you how to best cover and protect your tube site.
- Your tube may be held in place with adhesive tape. Remove this tape gently to prevent irritation to your skin.
- Wash the skin with soap and warm water. Be careful not to pull or push on the tube while the tape is removed.
- If your tube is secured by a plastic ring or anchor, gently lift it off the skin and cleanse underneath it.
- Rinse the skin with warm water and pat dry.
- The site should be cleaned as described above at least daily.

Applying New Tape to the Skin

- Cut two pieces of tape, each about three to four inches long.
- Use one length of tape to secure the tube to your skin a few inches away from the site.
- Place the second length of tape on the end of the gastrostomy tube, creating a “tab” by adhering both adhesive sides together.
- Use a safety pin to secure the end of the tube to a piece of clothing, to prevent tugging or pulling on the gastrostomy site.
- When applying tape, make sure that you rotate tape sites, so that skin does not become irritated at one spot. Also, make sure that the tube does not get kinked.

Things To Watch For

- **The Tube Falls Out:** Cover the abdominal site with a clean gauze pad. The opening will begin to shrink right away so call your home care agency immediately to arrange placement of a new tube within a few hours. If replacement cannot be arranged quickly ask your nurse for instructions.
- **The Tube Moves In or Out:** If you notice that your gastrostomy tube has moved out or in, contact the home care agency. They may evaluate the tube and reposition it if necessary.
• **You Have Difficulty Confirming Placement:** If you follow our instructions on checking placement with a stethoscope and syringe, and have difficulty deciding if the tube is in the right place, contact your home care agency. They may evaluate the tube for you. Do not use the tube.

• **The Tube is Clogged:** If you have difficulty flushing your tube, try using warm water. Gently pull back on an empty syringe, then try to instill warm water into the tube without using any excessive force.

• **The Skin At The Site Gets Red/Irritated:** If the skin becomes red, inflamed, or irritated, contact your home care nurse or doctor for advice. Many will recommend a different cleansing procedure, and possibly an ointment for the area to soothe the skin and make you more comfortable.

• **There Is Leakage At The Tube Site:** If you notice leakage of either formula or gastric content, it is possible that the amount of formula being given is too much, or the rate is too fast. It may also be that the gastrostomy tube is too small. Notify your home care nurse or doctor. They may need to evaluate the feeding schedule or tube size.