Continuous Gravity Tube Feedings

Continuous gravity feedings are given around the clock with a bottle or bag and feeding set. With this method, feedings are stopped at certain times for giving water and medicines. Your dietitian will give you information on the name, amount and times to give your tube feeding and water.

Supplies:
- Gravity set tubing
- Hood or pole to hang tube feeding set
- Tube feeding (warmed)
- Water
- Measuring cup
- 50 ml or larger syringe that fits your tube

How to give the Tube Feeding:
1. Allow tube feeding to warm to room temperature for 20 minutes if it was in the refrigerator. This helps prevent bloating and cramping.
2. Put together the gravity tube feeding set according to the package directions.
3. Check for tube placement before each feeding. Read handout Checking For Tube Placement.
4. Check for stomach residual every four (4) hours (see handout Checking For Stomach Residuals). Stop the tube feeding 15 minutes before checking the residual.
5. Sit up at a 45 degree angle or more during the tube feedings and for 30 - 45 minutes after the feeding. This will prevent tube feeding from possibly coming back up from your stomach and going into your lungs.

6. Use of a small bottle (240 ml or 8 fluid oz):
   - Check the bottle for cracks or leaks. If there are any, get a new bottle. Return the bottle to where you bought it.
   - Put the bottle into the plastic holding bag.
   - Close the flow clamp on the tubing.
   - Remove the bottle cap. Remove the cap from the feeding set and screw the top to the bottle.
• Turn the bottle upside down and hang it from the hook or pole at least two (2) feet above your head.
• Squeeze the drip chamber until it is at least half full.
• Open the flow clamp and fill the tubing before hooking it into your feeding tube.
• Close the flow clamp on the tubing.
• Attach the tubing of the gravity tube feeding set to your feeding tube.
• Open the clamps and set the flow rate.

7. Use of a large bag:

• When the bottle is empty but some feeding is left in the tubing, give the prescribed amount of water.
• Close the flow clamp on the tubing.
• Fill the bag with the correct amount of tube feeding.
• To keep the tube feeding from becoming spoiled:
  ▶ Always write the date and time on the tube feeding container when it is opened.
  ▶ Only hang enough tube feeding that will be taken in 8 - 12 hours.
  ▶ Refrigerate any opened, unused tube feeding. Throw away all tube feeding that has been opened and not used after 48 hours.
  ▶ Do not add new tube feeding to formula left in the bag. Throw away any old tube feed and rinse the bag before adding new tube feeding.
  ▶ Change the tube feeding set every 48 hours.
• Attach the tubing of the feeding set to the bag.
• Hang the bag on the hook or pole at least two (2) feet above your head.
• Squeeze the drip chamber until it is at least half full.
• Remove the cap from the end of the feeding set.
• Open the flow clamp and fill the tubing before hooking it into your feeding tube.
• Close the flow clamp on the tubing.
• Attach the tubing of the tube feeding set to your feeding tube.
• Open the clamp and set the flow rate.
• Stop the tube feeding at the prescribed times to give water and medicines.
• Clean all the supplies to reuse. The large bag can be washed with warm water and soap and reused for seven (7) days.
How to give water:

You need extra water while you are getting tube feeding. Your body needs more fluid than you can get in your tube feeding alone. This can be done by using the bottle or bag or a syringe to give the water.

- **Bag or Bottle**
  1. When the bag or bottle is empty, clamp the tubing before the feeding runs out of the tubing.
  2. Put the prescribed amount of water into the bottle or bag.
  3. Open all clamps.
  4. Run the water at the prescribed rate.
  5. When the bottle or bag is empty, but some water is left in the tubing set, clamp the tube. Add the prescribed amount of tube feeding to the bottle or bag and run the feeding. If a small bottle (240 ml) is used, hang a new bottle of tube feeding.

- **Syringe**
  1. Clamp the tubing on the feeding set and remove it from your feeding tube.
     - If you have a feeding tube with a "Y" port, clamp the tube feeding set. Put the syringe into the side opening used for fluids.
  2. Take the plunger out of the syringe and attach the syringe to your feeding tube.
  3. Pour the prescribed amount of warm water into the syringe. Allow it to flow in by gravity.
  4. When all the water is in, reattach the tube feeding set and start your tube feeding as before.

Read the handout **Questions And Answers About Tube Feeding** for any concerns you have about giving tube feedings, the tube itself and tolerating the feeding. Ask your health care professional for answers to questions you may still have.

**Note:** If you have a tracheotomy tube or an endotracheal tube, the only water that should be put through your feeding tube is sterile water. If you have been told that you are at risk for breathing fluid into your lungs (aspiration), use only sterile water. Ask for the handout **How To Make Sterile Water**. Your health care professional can answer any questions you may have.

If you would like more written information, please call the Library for Health Information at (614)293-3707. You can also make the request by e-mail: health-info@osu.edu.

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