Questions and Answers About Tube Feeding

What should I do if my tube feeding formula will not flow into the tube?

• Check your tube for kinks.
• If your pump has a battery, check that the battery is charged.
• If your feeding tube is clogged, flush your tube with room temperature water.
• If you use a syringe to give your formula, make sure to remove the cap on the syringe.
• If you have a clamp on your tube, make sure the clamp is open.

What should I do if my feeding pump does not work?

• Call the company who rents you the pump.

Can I eat during my tube feeding?

• Check with your doctor before you try to eat.

If I am not hungry, can I skip my tube feeding?

• Do not skip your feeding unless you feel full, bloated or sick to your stomach.
• If you feel full, you may need to check your stomach residual. Your doctor will tell you if you need to check your residuals and the amount of residual that is okay for you to have before each feeding.
What should I do if I get too much stomach residual?

- Your doctor will tell you if you need to check your stomach residuals, and the amount of residual that is okay for you to have.
- **Call your doctor right away** if you have nausea, bloating or vomiting.

How do I know if I am getting enough tube feeding formula?

- If you are getting enough tube feeding formula, you should not feel hungry.
- It is important to weigh yourself one time each week and call your doctor or dietitian if you lose 2 pounds or more.

Can medicines go down my feeding tube?

- Most medicines can go into your tube. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before giving medicines through your tube.
- **Do not** mix your medicine with your tube feeding formula. Only mix your medicine with water.
- If you take more than one medicine, give each medicine one at a time.
- Rinse your tube before, between and after all the medicines that are given.

How do I know if my feeding is going in too fast or too slow?

- **If your feeding formula is given too fast**, you may feel full and bloated or have cramps, stomach pain or diarrhea.
- **If your feeding formula is given too slow**, you may not get enough calories and could start to lose weight.
What if I begin to choke, have trouble breathing, or cough up white mucous?

- Some of your tube feeding formula may have gone into your lungs.
- If you have trouble breathing:
  ▶ Sit up right away.
  ▶ Stop your feeding.
  ▶ Relax and take slow, deep breaths.
  ▶ If you have a feeding tube in your nose (nasogastric or NG-tube) and you continue to choke, pull your tube out.
  ▶ Keep your head elevated so there is less risk that you will choke.
  ▶ **Call your doctor right away.**

What should I do if my tube becomes clogged?

- To prevent your feeding tube from getting clogged, it is important to always flush your tube:
  ▶ Before and after each feeding
  ▶ Before, in between and after giving each medicine. If you take more than one medicine, give each medicine one at a time.
  ▶ Before and after you check stomach residual, if ordered by your doctor.
  ▶ If you are on a continuous pump, it is important to flush your feeding tube every 4 to 6 hours.
  ▶ At least 1 time each day
- Ask your doctor or dietitian about products that are available to clear clogs.
- If your tube is clogged follow these steps:
  ▶ Use warm water and a syringe to flush your tube. Move the plunger on the syringe in and out several times to clear the clog.
  ▶ If you can see the clog, rub your fingers along the outside of the tube to break up the clog.
- If your clog does not clear, **call your doctor right away.**
What should I do if formula is leaking around the tube onto my skin?

- If you see an increase in leakage around your tube or you are not able to control the leakage, **call your doctor right away**. Your stomach may be too full or the tube may be out of place.
- **Do not** give tube feeding formula or medicines until you have talked with your doctor.
- If your leakage is nonstop, **do not use** your tube and connect your tube to a drainage bag.

What should I do if my feeding tube falls out or it is pulled out by mistake?

- **Call your doctor or right away**.
- **Do not** use your feeding tube.
- If you go to the Emergency Department, take your tube with you.

What should I do if my tube moves in or out more than one inch?

- **Call your doctor right away**.
- **Do not** use your feeding tube if your tube has moved out of place.

How long can my feeding tube stay in place?

- Your doctor will tell you how long your feeding tube can stay in place. Each type of feeding tube is different.

What can I do if I have problems with my skin around the tube?

- Keep the skin around your feeding tube clean and dry.
- If your doctor or dietitian has told you to use a dressing, it is important to change it at least one time each day or when it becomes wet or soiled.
What should I do if the area around my tube is red, swollen, tender or feels hard?
• Call your doctor.

What if I feel full, bloated, sick to my stomach or if I vomit?
• Call your doctor or dietitian right away and hold all feedings.
• Try to have a bowel movement one time every 2 days.

What should I do if I have diarrhea?
• Check to see if your formula is going in too fast or you are getting too much formula at one time. Call your doctor. You may need to slow down your feeding rate.
• If you are taking any medicines, check with your doctor or pharmacist to see if they can cause diarrhea.
• Check with your doctor or dietitian to see if you need a different kind of tube feeding formula.
• Call your doctor right away if you have:
  ▶ Bright red blood in your stool
  ▶ Black stool or stool that looks like tar
  ▶ Pain in your abdomen

What should I do if I feel thirsty?
• Take all of your feeding formula and water as ordered by your doctor.
• Talk with your doctor or dietitian about how much fluid you can put down your tube.

What if I am constipated?
• Check to make sure you are getting the right amount of water as ordered by your doctor or dietitian.
• Ask your dietitian about a tube feeding formula that has fiber.
• Call your doctor if you have constipation with no bowel movement for 3 days. Your doctor may order you medicine to help your constipation.