



Southport and  
Ormskirk Hospital  
NHS Trust

# **PATIENT INFORMATION**

## **Tube Feeding at Home**

Balloon Gastrostomy (BG)

**Please bring these notes with you every time you attend clinic or are admitted to hospital or give them to the dietitian when they come to visit you at home. Thank you.**

## USEFUL INFORMATION AND CONTACT DETAILS:

**Hospital Dietitian:** \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Community Dietitian:** \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Feed Company:** \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
(24 hour helpline)

**Feed Company Nurse:** \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Endoscopy Unit:** \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Useful Support Group:**

Patients on Intravenous and Nasogastric Nutrition Therapy  
(PINNT)

PO Box 3126

Christchurch

Dorset

BH23 2XS

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ NHS No: \_\_\_\_\_

**Your tube details:**

Type of tube: \_\_\_\_\_

Manufacturer and size: \_\_\_\_\_

Date tube placed: \_\_\_\_\_

Usual tube length (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Balloon volume: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of water for balloon: \_\_\_\_\_

**Your feeding regimen:**

Feed: \_\_\_\_\_

Volume: \_\_\_\_\_

Rate: \_\_\_\_\_

Timings: \_\_\_\_\_

**Flushes:**

Type of water: \_\_\_\_\_

Before and after feed: \_\_\_\_\_

Before and after medications: \_\_\_\_\_

In between medications: \_\_\_\_\_

In rest period: \_\_\_\_\_

## **TUBE FEEDING AT HOME**

It is necessary for you to be fed by tube because of your condition. This booklet has been designed to help you feed at home.

You will have been discharged from hospital with 7 days' supply of feed and feeding equipment e.g. giving sets and syringes. If you are using a feeding pump it will have been provided by the feed company.

Further supplies of feed as recommended by your dietitian will be prescribed by your GP and supplied either by your local pharmacist or the feed company.

Further supplies of giving sets and syringes will be supplied by the feed company.

**If you experience pain on feeding, prolonged or severe pain after your tube has been placed, fresh bleeding or external leakage of gastric (stomach) contents, stop feed/medication delivery immediately and contact your GP/out of hours service.**

### **What is a balloon gastrostomy?**

A balloon gastrostomy is a tube placed through your skin into your stomach. At the end of the tube inside the stomach is a small balloon filled with water. When filled with water the balloon prevents the tube from falling out. The tube usually needs changing approximately every three to six months.

# **HOW TO FEED AT HOME**

## **Checking and storing your feed.**

- Store unopened feed at room temperature.
- Check the label - is it the correct feed? - check the use-by date.
- Gently turn the bottle upside down and back again once before use. Do not shake the bottle as this will create air bubbles.

## **Is hygiene important when dealing with my tube and feed?**

Good hygiene is important to keep you free from infection.

- Always wash your hands with hot, soapy water and dry thoroughly with disposable paper towel (e.g. kitchen towel) prior to assembling the feed.
- Clean the surface where you will be handling the feed and equipment with hot, soapy water and dry thoroughly with disposable paper towel. Avoid unnecessary handling of equipment.
- Re-usable purple syringes should be washed in hot soapy water, rinsed thoroughly, air dried and stored in an air tight container.
- Giving sets should be discarded after 24 hours.
- If you need to disconnect your feed, ensure you close the end of the giving set.
- If using fresh tap water, run tap for ten seconds before filling a syringe or clean, plastic jug. If using cooled, boiled water, this should be placed in a clean, plastic jug with a lid and stored in the refrigerator for a maximum of 24 hours. Store at 4°C or below. Water should be given

at room temperature therefore remove from the refrigerator 30 minutes prior to feeding.

- Sterile feeds can be hung for up to 24 hours from opening provided they are handled as previously described and connected directly to the giving set. Any feeds decanted/poured into a sterile container or powdered feeds made up with liquid should only be hung for 4 hours at room temperature; however they may be kept in the refrigerator for 24 hours. Dispose of any opened feed after these times by placing the feed bottle containing any unused feed into the household waste.
- Feed containers should not be topped up with feed or water once feeding has started.

## **What equipment do I need for setting up my feed?**

Collect all the equipment you will need before assembling your feed:

- Feed
- Feeding pump
- Drip stand
- Giving sets
- Extension sets (if required)
- 60ml purple syringe
- Water as recommended by your dietitian
- Clean bowl/jug with lid
- Sterile containers (if required)

## Do I need to check my tube before using?

Yes, before putting anything down your tube it is important that you check your tube. If you see any of the following do NOT feed and seek advice from the feed company nurse.

- Split in the tube.
- More tube visible than usual
- Less tube visible than usual

## Do I need to flush my feeding tube?

Yes, it is important to flush the feeding tube regularly to prevent blockages.

- The tube should be flushed with water **before and after** each feed, **before and after** medications and **in between** each medication. For amounts of flushes and type of water to use please see your feeding regimen.
- Do not plunge the syringe with force.
- If you are not using your tube for feeding it is still necessary to flush the tube with 50ml water at least once daily to keep the tube clear.

## What can I put down my feeding tube?

- Feed
- Fresh tap water/cooled, boiled water/sterile water as advised by your dietitian.
- Medications in liquid or dispersible form (check with your pharmacist if you are unsure).



You should **not** put liquidised food down the tube as this may block it. Do not put anything down your tube that the dietitian has not recommended.

## **Why have I been given a feeding pump?**

If you are using a feeding pump, this helps to ensure that your feed is given at the correct rate and volume. It is important to keep your pump clean – wipe daily with a clean, damp cloth to remove debris. Contact the feed delivery company if the feeding pump is damaged in any way.

## **Do I need to be sitting up whilst feeding?**

Correct positioning during and after feeding will make you feel more comfortable and help to prevent complications.

- It is important to position yourself at an angle of 45° during feeding and for an hour afterwards.
- If you are feeding overnight, ensure you are supported by pillows and propped up to at least 30°. If this is not possible, please discuss with your dietitian.

## **How do I give medications via my feeding tube?**

- Any medication given via your tube should be in liquid or dispersible form. This includes self-administered medication such as Paracetamol. Ask your GP or pharmacist to provide these. Do not crush tablets unless advised to do so.
- Wash hands before and after giving medication.
- Stop the feed if it is running. Flush the tube with the recommended water using a 60ml purple syringe.

- Administer medication as prescribed by your doctor using a 60ml purple syringe. Smaller syringes may be used to measure medication.
- If more than one medication is due to be given at the same time, flush the tube with the recommended water in between giving each medication. **Do not mix medications together or add to the feed.**
- Flush the tube using a 60ml purple syringe with the recommended water after the last medication has been given. Re-start feed if appropriate.
- Some medications may interact with your feed. Check your medications with your pharmacist.

## **What do I do if my tube blocks?**

- Ensure that the tube is not kinked or a clamp fastened.
- Using a 60ml purple syringe, flush tube with 20ml of warm water. Wait 5 to 10 minutes and then try to flush it again.
- Using a gentle push and pull motion on the plunger of the syringe may help to dissolve the blockage. Sometimes massaging the tube gently with finger tips may help to break it up. Never use force.
- If the tube is still blocked, flush with 20ml carbonated water. Leave for 5 to 10 minutes and then try to flush again.
- Do not attempt to unblock the tube using sharp instruments.

- If the blockage persists contact your feeding company nurse, GP or the hospital that placed the tube for further advice.

## **Do I need to check if the balloon is inflated?**

- Once a week it is important to check the water in the balloon. You or your carer will be trained to do this or alternatively a district nurse may visit once a week to do this for you.
- If the amount of water you draw out of the balloon is less than expected and/or the water is discoloured, this could be a sign that the balloon is not working properly.
- If this happens you should contact the endoscopy unit or your feeding company nurse as soon as possible for advice on changing the tube as there is a risk the tube may fall out of the stomach. Alternatively, if you have been trained to do so and you have a spare tube you may change the tube yourself.

## **How do I check the balloon?**

- Collect equipment together – two 5ml syringes and water as advised by your dietitian.
- Wash your hands with hot, soapy water and dry thoroughly with disposable paper towel (e.g. kitchen towel).
- Fill one syringe with the correct amount of water as advised by your dietitian.

- Move the fixation plate back and push the tube in to the stomach slightly. Hold tube still by placing finger and thumb on either side.
- Insert the empty syringe into the balloon port and draw water out of the balloon. Check that the water you have withdrawn is the correct volume and colour and then discard.
- Insert syringe with fresh water into the balloon port and gently push water from syringe into balloon.
- Pull the tube back and move the fixation plate back to its original position.

## **How is the tube changed?**

A balloon gastrostomy tube is classed as a short-term device which will require changing approximately every three to six months. When the tube requires changing training can be given to you or your carer. Alternatively it will be changed in the endoscopy unit at the hospital.

## **What do I do if the tube falls out?**

- **If your tube falls out you will need to go to hospital as soon as possible to have the tube replaced. This is important as the stoma (hole into your stomach) will close up within one to two hours.**
- As a temporary measure to prevent it closing up, you may insert the tube gently into the stoma and secure in place with tape/plaster. Do not force and **do not put anything down the tube.**
- If you need to attend Accident and Emergency, phone ahead and ask them to arrange for you to see a nurse who can place a new tube.
- If you have a spare tube, take this with you.

## **How do I care for my stoma site and tube?**

- Always wash your hands thoroughly with hot water and soap before starting.
- Check the stoma site (where the tube comes out of your abdomen) every day. Tell your feed company nurse, district nurse or doctor at once if you notice any swelling, leakage, redness, soreness or pain.
- Clean and dry the area carefully each day with a lint free dressing or towel and mild, soapy water. Rinse thoroughly. If you have a fixation plate, ensure it is loosened and cleaned underneath.
- Do not apply a dressing unless you have been told to do so by the hospital that placed your tube or the team looking after you in the community.
- After you have had your tube in place for two weeks, rotate the tube 360° every day.

## **If I am not using my tube, what care is required?**

- The stoma site and tube should be checked and cleaned daily and the tube rotated as described above.
- The tube must be flushed at least once a day with 50ml water as advised by your dietitian.
- The balloon water should be checked weekly as described above.

## **Can I still bathe, shower or swim?**

After two weeks you can bath or shower as normal. Make sure the end of your tube is closed and dry the stoma site and tube thoroughly afterwards.

- It is advisable to cover the stoma site with a waterproof dressing when swimming.

### **How do I keep my mouth clean?**

- It is still important to brush your teeth twice a day
- A mouthwash may help if your mouth is dry however if you are nil by mouth you should take care not to swallow. Mouth swabs may be available from your GP.

### **Can I still eat?**

- You should not eat or drink anything unless you have been advised by a doctor or speech therapist that it is safe to do so.

### **Can I go on holiday?**

- Tube feeding does not stop you going on holiday however you may need a letter from your doctor and you should check you have the correct insurance.
- It may be possible to use the feed delivery company's travel service for the supply of your feed whilst on holiday. Please contact your dietitian for information at least eight weeks prior to travel.

### **What happens if I am admitted to hospital?**

- Please bring your feeding regimen into hospital to tell the hospital staff what feed you are having.
- If you have deliveries from a feed company, please notify them of your admission to hospital so that deliveries may be postponed until you are discharged home.

- There is no need to bring your pump, equipment or feed into hospital.

### **What do I do when I no longer need my pump?**

- If you have deliveries from a feed company, please contact them to arrange collection.

### **Will I have to be fed by a tube forever?**

- If your medical condition improves and you are able to eat and drink enough to meet and maintain your nutritional requirements, it may be possible to have your tube removed.

## **FOLLOW UP AT HOME**

### **Community Dietitian**

You will be contacted once at home by your community dietitian for follow up at a local clinic or in your own home. If you have any concerns you can contact us Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm.

### **Feed Company Nurse**

The feed company nurse will make contact and visit you within your first week at home and will liaise with the community dietitian after the visit.

### **24 hour Emergency Service**

The feed delivery company provides a 24 hour emergency helpline. The telephone number is listed at the front of this booklet. If you have any problems please call this first before attending Accident & Emergency.

If you have any other questions, please discuss these with the dietitian, the feed company nurse or district nurse.

**This covers the main issues relating to your tube feed, however other matters may arise that are not covered in this booklet. If you have any questions, please contact your dietitian, the feed company nurse or district nurse for advice.**



**During your contact with us, it is important that you are happy with your care and treatment. Please speak to a member of staff and/or the ward/department Sister/Charge Nurse if you have questions or concerns.**

## **MATRON**

A Matron is also available during the hours of 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. During these periods, ward/department staff can contact Matron to arrange to meet with you. Out of hours, a Senior Nurse can be contacted via the ward/department to deal with any concerns you may have.

## **INFECTION CONTROL REQUEST**

Preventing infections is a crucial part of our patients' care. To ensure that our standards remain high our staff have regular infection prevention and control training and their practice is monitored in the workplace. We ask patients and visitors to assist us in preventing infections by cleaning their hands at regular intervals and informing staff of areas within the hospital that appear soiled.

As a patient there may be times that you are unsure whether a staff member has cleaned their hands; if in doubt please ask the staff member and they will be only too happy to put your mind at ease by cleaning their hands so that you can see them.

## **SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS**

### **ANY CONDITION SPECIFIC DANGER SIGNALS TO LOOK OUT FOR:**

Pain on feeding, prolonged or severe pain after your tube has been placed, fresh bleeding or external leakage of gastric (stomach) contents.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR CONDITION**

- Your own GP

### **OTHER USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS/CONTACTS:**

NHS 111

Stop Smoking Helpline (Sefton) – 0300 100 1000

Stop Smoking Helpline (West Lancashire) – 0800 328 6297



**Please call 01704 704714 if you need  
this leaflet in an alternative format**

**Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust**

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Tel: (01695) 577111

Southport & Formby District General Hospital  
Town Lane, Kew, Southport, PR8 6PN  
Tel: (01704) 547471

**FOR APPOINTMENTS**

Telephone (01695) 656680  
Email [soh-tr.appointments@nhs.net](mailto:soh-tr.appointments@nhs.net)

Please remember to complete the **attached** *Friends and Family Test*.

Alternatively, you can complete the *Friends and Family Test* on-line by going to: [southportandormskirk.nhs.uk/FFT](https://southportandormskirk.nhs.uk/FFT)

**Thank you**

Author: Nichola Hammond  
Ref: 15/52  
Version: 2  
Reviewed: September 2021  
Next Review: September 2024