
Taking Medicine Through a Feeding Tube

You're going home with a feeding tube in place. If you normally take any medicines by mouth, you will need to take them through your feeding tube. You can make this easier by calling your pharmacist to see whether any of your medicines are available in liquid form. If they are, ask that your prescriptions be filled with liquid medicines.

You were shown how to care for your type of feeding tube in the hospital. If you did not get an instruction sheet on caring for your tube, ask for one.

Before you start

Remember to:

- Use liquid medicines whenever possible.
- Tell all your healthcare providers that you take medicines through your tube.
- Don't crush or dissolve extended-release or enteric-coated medicines unless directed by your healthcare provider.
- Don't mix medicines with feeding formula unless your healthcare provider says it's OK.
- Flush your tube before, between, and after giving medicines to prevent the tube from getting clogged.

Gather your supplies

Wash your hands thoroughly with mild soap and clean, running water.

Here's what you will need:

- Measuring cup that is marked with mL or cc (these are the same thing)
- Measuring spoon or syringe marked with mL or cc
- 50 mL (cc) or larger syringe
- Bowl of tap water (2 cups or more)

Taking your medicine

Recommendations include the following:

- Check the placement of your feeding tube the way you were shown in the hospital.
- Prepare each medicine the way you were shown in the hospital.
- Be sure to use the correct port on the feeding tube for your medicines
- Take your medicines in the following order:
 - Liquid medicines first

- Medicines that need to be dissolved second
- Thick medicines last
- Measure the prescribed amount of liquid medicine, or crush pills and dissolve powder in 15 mL (about 1 tablespoon) or more of warm water.
- Remove the plunger from the 50 mL syringe. Pour 30 mL of warm water into the syringe and flush your tube.
- Pour the medicine into the syringe. Don't use the syringe plunger to push the medicine into the tube. Let the medicine flow in slowly.
- Be sure to flush your tube with 5 mL (about 1 teaspoon) or more of warm water between all medicines.
- Take each medicine by itself. Never mix medicines together in the syringe.
- Flush the tube with 30 mL of warm water after all medicines have been given.
- Wait before restarting your tube feeding. Some medicines don't work when mixed with the feeding formula. Ask your healthcare provider how long you should wait to start feeding after taking medicines.
- Keep your tube clamped in between feedings.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of the following:

- Bloody or coffee-colored drainage through the tube. Depending on the amount of bleeding, your provider may direct you to seek medical care right away.
- Coughing
- Trouble breathing during feeding, flushing, or giving medicine
- Tube that can't be unclogged
- Tube that falls out or trouble telling if the tube is in your stomach
- Tube that is cracked or breaking down
- Diarrhea that lasts more than 3 loose stools
- Constipation that lasts more than 48 hours
- Nausea or vomiting
- Red, warm, or tender skin around the tube
- Sudden increase or decrease in the amount of drainage through the tube
- Sudden weight loss or gain (more than 2 pounds in 24 hours)
- Bloating or tight stomach
- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as advised by your healthcare provider