



Feeding and feeding tube care at home

Indications:

Your pet might need short term nutritional support to recover from a disease or surgery. The feeding tube might be placed for long term nutritional needs. In addition, if your pet has a feeding tube, some medications might also be given in liquid form through a tube, instead of in capsule or tablet form via the mouth.

Tube care:

Esophagostomy tube (esophagus tube):

Site care:

-This involves a daily check and change of the cotton pads covering the site. once daily and change the cotton pad if it appears soaked or soiled. Round cotton make-up pads purchased from a local grocery store can be sliced just to the middle to make a spot for the tube to enter or a hole can be cut out of the middle with the tube threaded through the hole. -A bandage is provided for the neck (kitty collar for cats/small dogs) or a larger vetwrap bandage for dogs. This bandage should secure the tube and be always on/in place, but not be too snug (would risk interfering with breathing).

Things to look for are:

-Discharge: If there is any discharge, you may gently clean it away with a clean cloth. It is normal for there to be a very small amount of discharge or crusted material around the tube site.

-The site should not be painful, swollen, very red, bruised, or have pus coming from the site.

-Suture breaking around the tube

-Tube moving in and out of the site (ie: not being securely in place) – if a longer than usual part of the tube is visible, then the tube might be loose, and might be at risk of coming out. It should be replaced under sedation/anesthesia by a veterinarian.

-Damage to the tube

Gastrostomy tube (stomach tube):

Site care:

This involves a daily check and change of the cotton pads covering the site. once daily and change the cotton pad if it appears soaked or soiled. Round cotton make-up pads purchased from a local grocery store can be sliced just to the middle to make a spot for the tube to enter or a hole can be cut out of the middle with the tube threaded through the hole. -T-shirt or stockinette to cover the tube and prevent it from catching on furniture, a cage/crate or tree branches.

Things to look for are:

-Discharge: If there is any discharge, you may gently clean it away with a clean cloth. It is normal for there to be a very small amount of discharge or crusted material around the tube site.

- The site should not be painful, swollen, very red, bruised, or have pus coming from the site.



- Suture breaking,
- Tube moving in and out of the site (ie: not being securely in place).
- Damage to the tube

Planned tube removal:

This is performed at a recheck visit, when we're sure your pet is eating well and no sooner than 2-3 weeks after placement (to allow the stomach and body wall to heal together and prevent leakage of stomach contents into the abdomen). Typically, no sedation is needed, but it is advised to withhold food the night before & morning of the visit, in case sedation is needed.

The insertion site will heal very quickly and will not need sutures. Typically, it only requires a bandage for 1 day.

Unplanned tube removal

- If the tube is removed accidentally, it might need to be replaced (if your pet still needs it)
- If a tube comes out unplanned, please contact us, and we might advise to come in to us (or a closer-by clinic) where the site can be looked at, and potentially a contrast study performed to check for leakage.

Feeding guidelines:

Specific instructions for the type of food, amount of food, and frequency of feeding will be provided for your pet in their visit summary.

General tips are:

- Food prep: Take 1 can of food and blenderize it with about a quarter of a cup of water to make a batch of food for tube feedings. It should be about the consistency of a smoothie (it can be thicker for large diameter gastrostomy tubes, but needs to be thinner for esophagostomy tubes).

If large chunks are noted, you can pass it through a strainer to remove the chunks. If it is too thick add a little more water at a time until it is the right consistency. If too thin, add a little more food to the blender. You can make a batch of several feedings at a time and store them sealed in the fridge until needed.

- Feeding:

- Any time you administer a tube feeding or medications in the tube, be sure to flush the tube with 5-10ml room temperature water before and after using the tube.
- Draw up food into a syringe and warm the syringe with his food in a warm water bath bowl for about 5-10 minutes. You can test the temperature by placing syringe on the inside of your wrist to ensure that it is not too hot. The food should be lukewarm.
- Attach a separate syringe with just water in it to the tube, and slowly (30-60 seconds) flush about 5-10 mLs of lukewarm water into the tube.
- Attach the syringe with the food and give the full amount of food slowly over 20-30 minutes. Watch carefully for signs of nausea during feedings (restlessness, drooling, retching) and stop or slow down if you see these.



- Remove the feeding syringe when finished, and reattach a water-only syringe. If medications are to be given at the time of the feeding by tube, now would be an adequate time to do so.
- Flush the tube with 5-10 mLs of water as done previously. This will ensure the food and medications have been flushed out of the tube and into the stomach. If food or medications sit in the tube, it will clog the tube.
- Always re-cap the tube at the end of feedings. Leaving the cap off the tube could allow a large amount of air to get into your pet's stomach, or, a large amount of food/fluids to spill out of the stomach.

Things To Look Out For During Feeding:

- If you feel resistance, stop the feeding. Try to flush a small amount of water. If you feel resistance during water flushes, please stop.
- If your pet starts to lick their lips, starts to drool, or becomes restless stop the feeding. Wait for 5 minutes and then try to start the feeding again. If any of these signs continue, stop the feeding completely and try again at the next scheduled time. These signs can indicate the feeding is going too quickly, or that they are nauseous. If it happens again at the next feeding, please contact your veterinarian, an emergency clinic, or Purdue.
- If your pet gags, retches or vomits during the feeding process, stop the feeding immediately. You can try at the next scheduled feeding time. If it happens again at the next feeding, please contact your veterinarian, an emergency clinic, or Purdue.

Feeding tips & FAQ:

- Flushing the tube with water after feeding will help avoid the tube from clogging up. Most feeding instructions incorporate the amount of water that the tube can be flushed with before and after giving the prescribed amount of food.
- Avoid the food (or water) being cold, or too warm prior to feeding.
- always make sure that any connectors or caps are securely tightened after feeding to avoid food & stomach contents spilling out of the tube.