



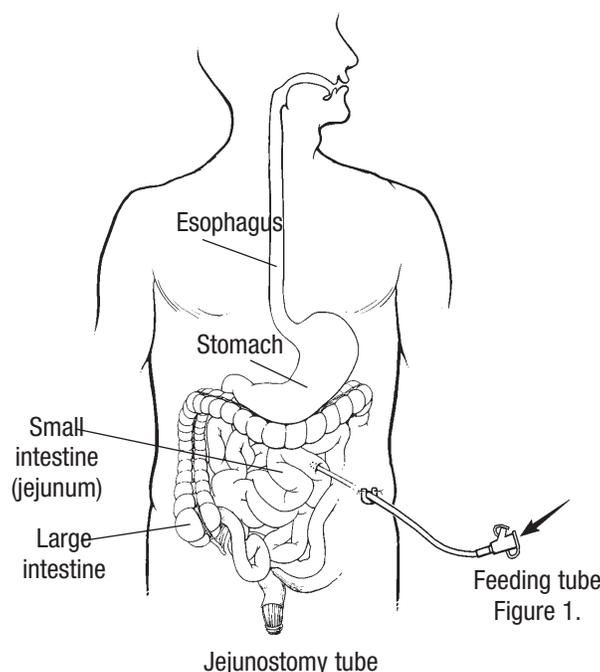
Jejunostomy Tube

Care of Your Feeding Tube

Introduction

A feeding tube has been put into part of your small intestine called the jejunum. The purpose of the tube is to give you liquid nutrition when you are not able to get enough calories by mouth to meet your need for good nutrition.

This information shares how to care for your feeding tube and the skin around the tube. When you follow these directions, you may help avoid infection and chapped or raw skin.



Keeping the tube open

To help keep the tube from getting clogged, it is important to rinse, or flush, your feeding tube with tap water. This should be done after you've had a tube-feeding and after any medicine has been put in the tube.

If you are not using the tube, it should be flushed at least once daily to keep it open.

Supply needed: One, 35 milliliter (35 ml) syringe

How to flush the tube:

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Pull 30 ml of room-temperature tap water into the syringe.
3. Put the tip of the syringe into the end of the feeding tube. Slowly push the plunger in so the water goes into the tube.

Caring for your skin

The skin around the tube may become sore and a bit red. This could be caused by fluids from the stomach or intestines that leak out from the tube or the area where the tube goes into the intestine.

Use the directions that follow to clean the skin around your tube at least once a day. Clean the area more often if fluid is leaking or draining from the tube-insertion area.

Be careful with the tube

Be careful not to pull out the tube when you clean the skin.

If you have a tube holder around the tube, change the tube holder once a week or more often if needed. If the holder comes off while you are bathing or due to sweat, replace it then also.

The tube should be attached, or secured, to your skin. If it is allowed to hang using only the stitches to hold it in place, the skin around the incision probably will become irritated. This may cause more drainage and the need to wash more often.

Use a tube holder or tape to keep the tube in place. If those ideas don't work for you, talk to your health care provider for other ideas.

Collect the needed supplies:

- Clean gauze
- Clean washcloth and towels
- Clean cotton-tip swabs
- Mild soap
- Warm water
- New tube holder

Wash the skin:

1. Wash your hands with soap and water. Use a clean towel to dry your hands.
2. Remove the gauze dressing if you use it. Be careful to hold the tube so it doesn't come out when you take off the tape and gauze. **Look to see how much of the tube is outside of your body. If it is pulled out a little, you will need to gently push it back in to the correct length. Your health care provider may ask you to measure the tube that hangs outside your body.**
3. Wash your hands again with soap and water. Use a clean towel to dry your hands.
4. Use the washcloth, warm water and mild soap to wash the skin. If you wish, use cotton-tip swabs to clean around the stitches.
5. Rinse the area well using a washcloth and warm water.
6. If you are using a tube holder, leave it in place or change it if needed.
7. If the skin has any scabs, carefully take them off. First, soften the scabs by laying a damp cloth over the area. Next, use cotton-tip swabs dipped in water to lift up the scabs. Last, rinse the area well with warm water.
8. Do not cover the skin with gauze or clothing right away. Allow the skin to air dry.
9. Put a new piece of gauze around the tube if there is drainage. Tape the gauze in place. You do not need to use gauze if there is no drainage.
10. Be sure your tube is secured using a tube holder or tape.

Bathing

You may shower while the tube is in place. Do not use a bathtub or swim when you have a jejunostomy tube.

Using the tube to take medicine

If your health care provider tells you to take medicine through the tube, ask for liquid medicine. If you have to take pills, ask your provider or the pharmacist at the drug store if your pills can be crushed. If yes, follow the directions below. Do not mix crushed pills with a tube feeding, unless your health care provider says it's OK.

You may use the same syringe for each of the steps listed here.

1. Flush the tube with 30 ml of room-temperature tap water.
2. If you are taking liquid medicine, pull the correct amount into a syringe and skip to step 6.
3. Crush the pill(s) completely in a small bowl or pill crusher.
4. Mix the pill(s) with enough warm water to be able to pass the liquid through the syringe and tube.
5. Pull the watery medicine into the syringe. Be sure to get all medicine into the syringe.
6. Position yourself with your head and chest raised above your stomach. Push the medicine into the tube.
7. Repeat these directions if you need to take more medicine. Use the syringe to flush the tube with at least 5 ml of room-temperature water between each medicine.
8. After all medicine has been taken, flush the tube with 30 ml of room-temperature tap water.
9. Recap your feeding tube and clean the supplies you used.

Possible problems

- **The feeding tube falls out:** *The hole will close — sometimes in less than 12 hours — if the tube is not put back in right away.* Clean the skin as usual. Then cover the area with gauze and tape the gauze in place. **If you still need a feeding tube, you will need another procedure or surgery to replace the tube. It is very important that you get medical help as soon as you see that the tube has fallen out.**
- If the tube falls out Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., call Mayo Clinic right away and ask to speak with your health care provider. If the tube falls out at another time, have someone take you to an urgent care or emergency room.
- **The tube is stitched in place and the stitches come loose, but the tube stays in:** Tape the tube in place. Call your health care provider to ask for directions.
- **The tube becomes clogged:** Use a syringe to push 15 ml of warm water into the tube. If the water won't go through, gently pull and push the syringe's plunger back and forth many times until the water flows freely. If you try this for a few minutes and the water still won't go in, call your health care provider. (Also see "When to call your health care provider.")

Do not put anything other than water through the tube unless your health care provider tells you to.

- **You run out of tube holders:** Contact your medical-supply company for more holders. If you don't have that phone number, call your home enteral nutrition dietitian. He or she can help you learn what kind of tube holder you are using and help you contact a supply company.

When to call your health care provider

If you notice any of the following, call your health care provider or home health agency, if you are using one.

- Increased tenderness, redness or swelling where the tube goes in.
- Increased pain or pain not helped by pain medicine.
- Drainage, oozing, bleeding or bad-smelling odor coming from the area.
- Temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or greater.
- Chills.

If you have questions after reading this information, call your health care provider.

This material is for your education and information only. This content does not replace medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. New medical research may change this information. If you have questions about a medical condition, always talk with your health care provider.