

Tube Feeding by Gravity

A flexible tube has been placed through your nose or into your stomach. Through this tube, you can take in liquids, formula and medicines as directed by your care team.

Your tube is a: Nasogastric tube Gastrostomy tube

Goals for Gravity Tube Feeding

Formula: _____

_____ cans per day provides:

_____ calories _____ grams of protein and _____ milliliters (mL) of fluid.

Tube Feeding Schedule

mL = milliliter

Feeding #1:	_____ mL of water	Feeding #3:	_____ mL of water
	_____ cans of formula		_____ cans of formula
	_____ mL of water		_____ mL of water

Feeding #2:	_____ mL of water	Feeding #4:	_____ mL of water
	_____ cans of formula		_____ cans of formula
	_____ mL of water		_____ mL of water

Additional Fluid Needs

_____ cups _____ mL each day taken by _____ mouth or _____ feeding tube

For every scheduled can of formula you do not take (after reaching the goal), take in an extra 1 cup (240 mL) of water per day.

Other Instructions

Watch the video: “Tube Feeding at Home”

This video will teach you how to use tube feedings during cancer treatment. Learn why good nutrition is important and how cancer and its treatment may affect your nutrition and health. You will learn about:

- Tube placement procedure
- Self-care at home
- Gravity tube feeding

How to Watch the Video

Option 1: View through MyChart

To watch the tube feeding video online, log in to MyChart.mdanderson.org. In MyChart, select the **Resources** tab, and then **Videos**. Scroll down until you see the section **Discharge and Self Care at Home**. The video is in this section.

Option 2: View on YouTube

YouTube link: http://bit.ly/TubeFeedingatHome_MDAnderson

Option 3: View with Video on Demand (A viewing option within the hospital)

1. Press **Menu** on the nurse call/TV remote to see the Main Menu.
2. Select **Patient Education Videos**.
3. Press the Number Keys to enter the video’s ID number: **344**.

Helpful Fluid Conversions

1/2 syringe = 30 mL = 1 ounce (oz.)

1/2 cup = 120 mL = 4 oz. = 1/2 can

1 syringe = 60 mL = 2 oz. = 1/4 cup

1 cup = 240 mL = 8 oz. = 1 can

Steps in Gravity Tube Feeding

1. Clean preparation space and surrounding surfaces.
2. **Wash your hands** before handling the feeding equipment.
3. Gather your feeding equipment: water, formula, feeding set (bag and tubing) and 60 mL syringe. Formula and water should be at room temperature. If it is refrigerated, take it out of the refrigerator about 15 minutes before using. **Do not** microwave formula.
4. Before feeding, fill your syringe with at least 30 mL of water or as instructed by your dietitian. Unclamp or unplug the feeding tube. Connect the syringe to your feeding tube and flush the water into your stomach. This clears the tube for feeding.

5. Clamp the tube and remove the syringe.
6. Shake the formula well and pour it into your feeding bag. Squeeze the drip chamber and open the roller clamp, let the formula flow continuously through the tubing to the end of the tube. This is called priming and removes the air in the tubing.
7. Cover and refrigerate unused formula. Use formula within 24 hours. At home, **do not** hang formula in the feeding bag more than 12 hours.
8. Connect the feeding set (bag and tubing) to your tube.
9. Sit in an upright position. **Do not lie flat when feeding.** If you must remain in bed, place 2 pillows behind your back. **Do not** lie down for at least 30 minutes after feeding.
10. Unclamp the tube and adjust the roller clamp and height of the bag to allow the formula to flow into the stomach. The drip chamber has to be above your head for the formula to flow correctly. The desired feeding rate is about 1 drip per second. The feeding should take at least 30 minutes per can.
11. When there is very little formula left in the bag, add water to the bag and allow it to flow through your tube. Rinsing with water prevents your tube from becoming clogged and helps satisfy your body's fluid needs. You can also do this by flushing using syringe and water.
12. Clamp the tube. Disconnect the feeding set from your tube and close the plug on your tube.
13. **Secure your feeding tube** by taping it to your body. This will prevent accidental removal of the tube.
14. After the feeding, keep your head elevated to at least a 30-degree angle for 30 minutes.

Equipment Care

- During the day, rinse the bag and attached tubing with warm tap water **between each feeding**. Turn the bag upside-down to drain as much water as possible from the tubing. Store the bag and tubing in the refrigerator inside a sealed plastic bag.
- Most feeding bags can be used only for 1 day. Do the following process if you need to use the feeding bag longer due to lack of supplies.
 - **After the final feeding of the day**, dissolve about $\frac{1}{4}$ of a teaspoon of liquid dishwashing soap with hot tap water in a glass.
 - Pour the mixture into the feeding bag.
 - Recap the bag, close the roller clamp, and shake it well.
 - Thoroughly rinse the bag and tubing with tap water. After washing, drain again and store the bag and tubing in the refrigerator inside a sealed plastic bag.

Medicine

- Medicines can clog your tube. **Only** use medicines in your tube that your doctor prescribes. **Do not** mix medicines with your formula or with other medicines.
- **Do not** administer medicines with the feeding bag and tubing. You must use the syringe. Give each medicine separately. A pharmacist can review your medicine to determine what can be placed in your feeding tube.
- Flush your tube with 30 to 60 mL of water **before and after** you put medicines through the tube.

Clogged Tube

- If the tube becomes clogged, gently flush **warm** water through it with a syringe.
- If the tube still does not open, call your nurse right away or return to the clinic.

Traveling

When traveling to and from MD Anderson, remember to bring all your tube feeding supplies and formula with you.

Emergency Care

- Call your clinic Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Call 911, go to the nearest hospital emergency center or go to the MD Anderson Acute Cancer Care Center.

Solving Problems

Some of the problems that you may have with tube feeding are listed below. Use the solutions in this chart to try to solve problems at home. If you cannot solve problems at home, contact your nurse and/or dietitian.

Problem	Solution
Nausea/ Vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adjust the formula to flow at a slower rate.• Ask your doctor if there are medicines to help reduce nausea.
Diarrhea	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase your fluid intake.• If you have diarrhea for more than 24 hours, call your doctor.
Constipation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase your fluid intake.• If allowed by your doctor, increase your exercise and activity.• Ask your doctor about a laxative, and/or stool softeners especially if you are taking pain medicine.• Contact your nurse or dietitian if you are not having normal bowel movements or think you may be constipated.

Problem	Solution
Cramping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure your formula and water flushes are at room temperature. • Adjust the formula to flow at a slower rate.
Gas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clamp or plug your tube right after you finish feeding. • If you have gas from constipation, follow the constipation tips listed on page 4. • If allowed by your doctor, increase your activity level. • Ask your doctor for anti-gas medicine.
Thirst	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If allowed by your doctor, take fluids by mouth as needed between tube feedings. • Increase your fluid intake by using water flushes through your feeding tube. • Your fluid needs may increase if you have a fever, diarrhea or constipation.



Formula and Supply Prescription

A dietitian from the clinical nutrition triage group will contact you (Monday through Friday) to discuss your options for choosing a durable medical equipment (DME) company. The DME company will contact you or your family member to review insurance coverage and arrange supply delivery.

Write down the name and contact number for your DME company:

Your order was entered on _____ for _____ months.

For your MD Anderson medical team to renew your tube feeding formula and/or supply order after the order expires, it is required that you are currently under the care of a MD Anderson provider and you have been seen recently. The MD Anderson dietitian must re-evaluate your nutritional needs and appropriate tube feeding schedule before placing a reorder.

Schedule an appointment within 1 month before the current order expires.

- Call your home clinic to schedule an appointment with the dietitian.
- If you have not seen your doctor recently, you will also need to request an appointment with the doctor.
- If you are not returning to MD Anderson for a doctor's appointment before your tube feeding prescription expires, the MD Anderson dietitian will not be able to help with your reorder. Contact the medical provider who is managing your care to request a tube feeding prescription.

Contacts

- For nutrition or tube feeding tolerance questions, call your dietitian at 713-563-5167.
- Call your DME company to order formula and supplies or for help managing the pump. If you have confirmed that the DME company should deliver your tube feeding supplies and

you do not receive them within 24 hours, call the DME company. Most companies have a 24-hour answering service.

- Contact the clinical nutrition triage group for order status and delivery of formula and supplies. They can also help with questions and concerns regarding your DME company. Call 713-563-5167, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

When Tube Feeding Formula and/or Supplies are not Covered by Insurance

Your insurance may not cover tube feeding formula and/or supplies. Use the information below to help you understand what is covered.

- Call your **insurance provider** for:
 - Guidelines for covering formula and tube feeding supplies
 - Any co-payments, co-insurance or deductible amounts that are your responsibility
 - A list of in-network DME providers
 - Speak with the **doctor** who ordered the tube placement. He or she can help you determine if you meet the guidelines for your insurance company to cover your formula and tube feeding supplies.
 - Call the DME company and discuss what is covered and the amount of your **out-of-pocket** responsibility.

Tube Feeding Formula

- If your insurance does not cover the tube feeding formula, ask the DME company for special pricing for MD Anderson patients.
- Some general oral supplements (Ensure[®], Boost[®], similar generic store brands) may be OK to use with tube feeding.
- Many nutrition formulas can be purchased at grocery stores, pharmacies, online and warehouse stores. Ask your dietitian (713-563-5167) for the appropriate formula and daily amount for you.
- Formula can also be purchased on the website for the company that manufactures the product. See the “Resources” section below. Your local pharmacy may be able to order your formula.

Tube Feeding Supplies (Bags, Tubing, Syringes)

- Some insurance companies may cover these supplies even when they do not cover the formula.
- If your insurance does not cover the supplies or formula, then you do not need a prescription if you purchase them online through websites such as <http://www.amazon.com>.
- Check with your doctor or nurse when your feeding tube is placed to get the specific size of the feeding bag and/or syringe you will need so that you can search online for a supplier.

Resources

Oley Foundation ([https://oley.org/page/Equipment Exchange](https://oley.org/page/Equipment_Exchange))

The Oley Foundation is a non-profit organization that offers an **equipment/supply exchange** to

help connect patients with free supplies and equipment donated by members who no longer need them. The individual requesting the donated supplies arranges pick up or pays the shipping costs.

Order products directly online. See examples below.

- Abbott Nutrition: 800-258-7677 (<https://abbottnutrition.com/>)
- Nestle Nutrition: 888-240-2713 (<http://www.nestlenutritionstore.com/>)
- Online general tube feeding supply order search
(http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1/183-2247881-9760630?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=Tube+Feeding+Supplies)

Compare DME providers for pricing and services offered. See examples below.

- Coram/CVS: 888-334-7978 or 877-936-6874 (<https://www.coramhc.com>)
- Option Care: 713-794-0599 (<https://optioncare.com>)
- LinCare: 800-965-2689
- Epic Medical Solutions: 866-883-1188 (<https://www.epichealthservices.com>)
- Paragon Healthcare: 931-433-9799 (<http://www.paragonhealthcare.com>)