become dislodged. You will then need further treatment.

- Use a syringe to flush the tube with water to prepare you for the feeding.

Description of the Procedure

Tube feedings may be delivered by several methods. Depending on your condition, a nurse, trained caregiver, or family member may deliver the tube feeding. If you are able, you may receive training on how to give yourself the feedings.

Syringe Method

The feeding tube will be clamped or kinked. A large syringe will be attached to it. The formula will be poured slowly into the syringe. The tube will then be unclamped, and the syringe will be held high. This allows gravity to move the formula through the tube. When the feeding is done, the tube will be flushed with water to prevent clogging. The tube will then be clamped again, and the syringe will be removed. The tube will be re-capped and taped to the body. If the syringe method is used, you will need several feedings throughout the day. These are called bolus feedings.

Gravity-Drip Method

First, the formula will be poured into the feeding bag. The bag will be hung on a pole. The tube from the bag will be connected to the clamped feeding tube. Once the two tubes are connected, the feeding tube will be unclamped, allowing the formula to flow. As with the syringe method, gravity will move the formula through the tube. The flow can also be adjusted using a regulator clamp. When the feeding is done, a syringe filled with water will be used to flush the tube. Lastly, the tube will be capped and taped to your body. You will have several feedings during the day.

Pump Method

These steps are similar to the gravity-drip method. The difference is that the tubes are connected to an electronic pump. The pump will be programmed to deliver the formula at a set rate per hour. For example, with continuous feeding, you will slowly be fed throughout the day. If you need this approach, the feeding will be stopped every four hours. The tube will be flushed with water so that it does not get clogged. The pump method can also be used for bolus feedings.

How Long Will It Take?

- Syringe method: 15-20 minutes
- Gravity-drip method: 1-2 hours
- Pump method: varies depending on whether it is continuous feeding (eg, 8-12 hours) or bolus feeding

Will It Hurt?

Getting nutrition through a tube is not painful. You may have an upset stomach. To help prevent this:

- Stay in an upright position during the feeding and for 30-60 minutes after the feeding.
- If advised by your doctor, do not exercise after the feeding.

Postoperative Care

After the tube feeding, the following steps will be taken by you or a caregiver:

- After thorough hand washing, the stoma site will be cleaned and gently dried.
- Feeding tube supplies will be cleaned with warm water and dish washing soap. The supplies will be thoroughly rinsed and air-dried. For pumps, follow the manufacturer's guidelines.

Remember that you still need to take care of your mouth and teeth. Brush your teeth twice a day, or as advised by your doctor.

Outcome

An enteral feeding tube may be either temporary or permanent. Most patients who receive an enteral feeding tube do not have life-threatening complications from the tube. In fact, the tube should allow you to receive nutrients otherwise unavailable to your body, which should help your body heal the underlying illness.

Call Your Doctor if Any of the Following Occurs

If you have tube feeding at home, you will be instructed to call your doctor right away if you have:

- Clogged tube

- Dislodged tube (most common during the first two weeks)
- Choking or difficulty breathing during the feeding
- Leaking of formula around the tube
- Redness, swelling, pain, bleeding, or discharge at the stoma site
- Cough, shortness of breath, chest pain
- Signs of infection, including fever and chills
- Nausea, vomiting, or abdominal swelling
- Severe abdominal pain
- Inability to pass gas or have a bowel movement
- Diarrhea
- Dehydration (eg, dry mouth, urinating infrequently, dark and/or bad smelling urine)

Index Terms

PEG Tube Feeding; Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastostomy Tube Feeding; Tube Feeding

Resources

Family Caregiver Alliance

http://www.caregiver.org/caregiver/jsp/home.jsp/

Family Doctor.org

http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home.html/

Reviewed Dates

- March 2011