

GASTROSTOMY TUBE FEEDING

What food is used with an gastrostomy tube, and how do you feed a pet with it?

A special liquid food mixture (listed below) is administered by a syringe through the tube three to five times per day. This food is formulated to meet the dog or cat's nutritional needs. To feed your pet, follow these steps:

Recommended diet:

Materials Needed:

60 cc syringes for feeding

_____ cc flushing syringe for water – your pet's tube holds approximately _____ cc of water, and you will use this amount of water to flush the tube before and after feeding

liquid diet – recommended above

bowl of water

paper towels

Be sure to have extra new syringes on hand, to replace those you are using when the plungers wear out and begin to stick. In a pinch, you can lubricate the plunger with vegetable oil prior to each use until you can get a new syringe.

1. *Pre-fill syringes with the prescribed amount of liquid diet.* Keep food in the refrigerator, but bring to room temperature to body temperature prior to feeding. Do not overheat food – you should be able to hold the warmed food in your hand without discomfort for as long as is necessary. Avoid heating the food in the microwave, as this can result in hot spots which can burn.
2. *Unwrap any bandage material* that may be covering the feeding end of the tube, to expose its cap. *Open the clamp* if there is one on the tube. *Remove the cap* from the feeding tube, and put it in a safe place if it is not attached.
3. Attach an empty feeding syringe and aspirate by pulling back on the plunger to see if there is undigested food still in the stomach. IF more than 10cc are present, put this fluid back in the stomach, flush the food, and try again at the next scheduled feeding. If this happens with regularity, speak with your veterinarian about revising the feeding schedule.
4. Draw the amount of water designated above from the water bowl into the flushing syringe. *Flush the feeding tube* with the amount of water designated above.
5. *Feed.* Using the feeding syringe provided, inject _____ ml of the food into your pet's feeding tube _____ times per day for a total of _____ ml per 24 hours. It is helpful to inject the food slowly, about 1-cc per second, and to elevate your pet's front feet so the food goes easily into the stomach. If your pet begins licking his/her lips or otherwise seems uncomfortable, slow or stop the feeding.

6. When the food has been injected, *flush the tube* with the same amount of water as before, remove the flushing syringe, and empty the remaining water into the water bowl. Draw the plunger back on the flushing syringe to the designated cc mark for flushing, filling the syringe with that amount of air. Attach the air filled syringe to the feeding tube and *clear the water from the tube* by flushing with air.
7. *Replace the cap* on the feeding tube, and replace the outer wrap if necessary.
8. If the tube becomes plugged, first check the tube for kinks. Massage the external tube to loosen any material in the tube. Use your fingers to squish the tube along its full length to break up any material. If the tube flushes with water but food does not go through, check the tip of the feeding syringe; it's possible the syringe tip is obstructed rather than the feeding tube.
9. If the tube becomes plugged, fill the tube with 5-10cc of water, and let sit for 15-30 minutes. Then try again. If that fails, try adding ½ teaspoon to ½ cup water and repeating. If that fails, try doing the same with cola.

Contact the hospital if you experience any difficulty when feeding your pet through its gastrostomy tube.

How do I care for my pet's e-tube?

The bandage should be changed twice weekly at first, and then at least once weekly, or when it gets soiled. At first, you will come in to the clinic for bandage changes, and then as you become comfortable with it, you can change the bandage yourself.

Each time you change the bandage, the stoma site should be cleaned and checked for signs of infection (redness, swelling, soreness, excessive foul smelling discharge, etc). It is normal for a thin rim of pink or red tissue to grow outward to the skin of the insertion site. It's a good idea to wash your hands before and after cleaning around the tube. Clean the insertion site with an antiseptic solution or gentle, non-drying cleanser recommended by your veterinarian. Clean debris on the tube with a warm, moist cotton ball, gauze, or cloth. After cleaning the tube, place gauze or a Button Buddy (<http://www.mybuttonbuddies.com>) over the insertion site. If any problems are noted, please see your veterinarian as soon as possible.

Call the veterinarian if:

- **the tube position has changed, the tube is no longer secure, or if it falls out**
- **the tube cracks or rips, or its attachments (feeding port, external stent) become detached. your pet develops a cough or breathing problems**
- **your pet has a fever or becomes lethargic**
- **If the tube clogs, and you can not clear it**

With a permanent gastrostomy tube, it is a good idea to obtain an equal diameter red rubber catheter for an emergency replacement at home in case the PEG tube comes out. The temporary replacement tube can safely be inserted 1 to 2 inches into the stoma and attached using adhesive tape while you get to the emergency service or your veterinarian. The stoma can begin closing immediately, making replacement difficult or impossible without anesthesia and/or surgery, so it is important not to delay.

If your pet's stomach tube becomes dislodged within 2 weeks of placement, this is an immediate, potentially life threatening emergency that needs to be seen right away!!

When is the tube removed?

This decision is based on the condition being treated. You will be instructed when to return, but removal of the tube is simple and does not require anesthesia. However, you should not attempt to remove it yourself.

References:

Ernest Ward, DVM – Lifelearn

Kathy Morris-Stilwell – Veterinary Information Network

Wendy Blount, DVM – Practical Vet Med Seminars