

MCRG Interventional Radiology
Patient Discharge Education
Gastrostomy Tube Care and Maintenance
Patient Discharge Education

Many patients, from birth to the elderly, require nutrition assistance by the use of a Gastrostomy tube. The goal is to assist in calorie intake to prevent weight loss and help you either stay healthy or recover from illness. If you have not been given restrictions by what you can eat by mouth, you may eat by mouth as well as use your tube for nutrition.

Tube Care

- Flush the tube with warm water (clean, drinkable tap water is fine) before and after each feeding as well as between medications if you choose to use your tube to instill medications
- If you are not using your tube, it needs to be flushed with 20-30 cc of clean warm tap water daily.
- Inspect the insertion site daily for redness, drainage, or pain. The new site should heal within 1 to 2 weeks and minimal redness is expected after this time. Call us if you are noticing new or worsening redness, drainage or pain.
- Keep the outer bumper cinched to the skin with the top of the bumper at the ____ cm marker on the tube. Check frequently throughout the day to make sure the bumper is cinched the correct marker to prevent leakage around the tube.
- It is expected that the buttons will fall off.

Medications

- Liquid medications are the safest for your g-tube and many medications can be switched to the liquid form. Ask the doctor that prescribed the medication or your pharmacist if the medication in question can be changed to liquid form.
- If you have a pill that you need give yourself, it must be fully dissolved in warm water before injecting into the tube. Even small clumps can clog your tube which requires a complete exchange, so be very careful.
- **DO NOT** dissolve time release medications. Doing so could cause you to get too much medication at one time. This includes Oxycontin, Oxycodone ER, or any medication with one of the following suffixes: CD, CR, ER, LA, SR, XL, XR. If there is any question, please ask the provider that wrote the prescription or your pharmacist.

Bathing

- You may shower 24 hours after placement
- Remove the dressing before showering and reapply after you've finished.
- **DO NOT** submerge in water of any kind for 6 weeks after placement. Once the site has healed, which is around 6 weeks for most patients, you may go in bathtubs. Do not swim in lakes, oceans, or non-chlorinated public waters for the duration of your tube being in place. Your doctor may allow submersion in clean water earlier.

- When swimming or any activity where the tube could be inadvertently pulled, wearing a t-shirt or one piece bathing suit (for women) decreases this risk.

Dressing Changes

- A dressing should be kept on the insertion site for 1 week after placement, changing it daily.
- After one week, a dressing is not required but many patients choose to keep their tube covered. If you choose to keep the site covered, the dressing should be changed at least every two days or after every shower.
- How to change your dressing:
 - Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water.
 - Take off the old dressing and discard.
 - Inspect the site for redness, swelling, tenderness or foul/bloody drainage.
 - Clean the insertion area (where the tube goes into the skin) with soap and water (may be done in the shower). Dry gently and thoroughly.
 - Cover the site with gauze and tape to skin.
- Do not use hydrogen peroxide to cleanse your tube site. Mild soap and water is all that is needed.
- Antibacterial ointment is not necessary, unless you have been told otherwise.

Activity

- You may resume your normal activities as tolerated, however most patients have site pain for about a week following placement. Minimal use of your abdominal muscles will decrease the pain.
- Keep the tube secure at all times (you may tape it to your skin) and avoid tugging on it.

Follow-up

- No further follow up with IR is needed unless you are having problems with your tube or site or until the time you no longer need your tube.
- Routine exchange of a functioning g-tube is not required, but is available to you approximately every 6-12 months. Please contact our department to inquire if this is something you are interested in.
- In most cases, G-tube exchanges due to malfunction or accidental removal are performed in Interventional Radiology; in the same procedure area where it was placed.
- G-tube removals are performed in our clinic and are scheduled by appointment only. This requires an order from your doctor or oncologist.

The following questions should be first directed to the doctor or department that referred you for the feeding tube:

- Which feeding formula to use?
- How long will the tube be needed?
- Calorie requirements for your specific problem.
- How much water you need to give through your tube daily?
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or weight loss problems.

Please call the Interventional Radiology Department if any of the following occurs:

- You see tube feeding formula leaking around the tube site.
- The tube is plugged or not working correctly.
- The skin around the tube is getting red or painful.
- Anything else that concerns you about the functioning of your tube.

Contact IR (As Soon As Possible) if the tube falls out completely or looks like it is about to fall out – **DO NOT** attempt to use your tube until it has been evaluated by Interventional Radiology.

Interventional Radiology Contact Information

Office Hours 8:00 am - 5:00 pm

Non-emergent questions:

Phone: (407) 649-6823 Fax: (407) 246-0374

Email: IRSupport@MCRG.com – *non urgent concerns only*

IR Clinic Scheduling:

Phone: (321) 841-8104 Fax: (407) 649-7873

Email: IRSupport@MCRG.com – *non urgent appointment requests only*

For all Urgent issues:

On nights and weekends for immediate concerns you may

Page the Interventional Radiologist at:

(321) 841-8122

Or call your Doctor.