

Tube Feeding by Gravity

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

Your tube is a: ☐ Nasogastric tube ☐ Gastrostomy tube

Goals for Gravity Tube Feeding

Formula: _____

_____ cartons per day provides:

_____ calories _____ grams of protein and _____ milliliters of fluid.

Tube Feeding Schedule

mL = milliliter

Feeding #1: _____ mL of water

_____ cartons of formula

_____ mL of water

Feeding #3: _____ mL of water

_____ cartons of formula

_____ mL of water

Feeding #2: _____ mL of water

_____ cartons of formula

_____ mL of water

Feeding #4: _____ mL of water

_____ cartons of formula

_____ mL of water

Additional Fluid Needs

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

For every scheduled carton of formula you do not take after reaching the goal, you will need to take in an extra 1 cup, or 240 mL, of water each day.

Other Instructions

Tube Feeding at Home Video

The **Tube Feeding at Home** video will teach you how to use tube feedings. Learn why good nutrition is important and how cancer and its treatment may affect your nutrition and health. You will learn about:

- Types of feeding tubes.
- Self-care at home.
- Gravity tube feeding.
- Syringe tube feeding, called bolus 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, go to **Resources**, and then Education **Video Library**. Scroll down until you see the section **Nutrition**. The video is in this section.

Option 2: View on YouTube

YouTube link: youtu.be/O_VORdOKSQI

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

- $\frac{1}{2}$ syringe = 30 mL = 1 ounce (oz.) = $\frac{1}{8}$ cup
- 1 syringe = 60 mL = 2 oz. = $\frac{1}{4}$ cup
- 2 syringes = 120 mL = 4 oz. = $\frac{1}{2}$ cup
- 4 syringes = 240 mL = 8 oz. = 1 cup

Gravity Tube Feeding

Preparation

1. Clean the work area where you will be preparing the feeding equipment.
2. **Wash your hands** before handling the feeding equipment.
3. Gather your feeding equipment: water, formula, feeding set – the bag and tubing – and 60 mL syringe. The 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 until it is half full. Open the roller clamp and let the formula flow 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 for longer than 12 hours.

Feeding

1. Connect the feeding set – the bag and tubing – to your tube.
2. 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.
3. Unclamp the tube and adjust the roller clamp and the height of the bag to allow the formula to flow into the stomach. The drip chamber should 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 20 to 30 minutes per carton.
4. When there is very little formula left in the bag, add water to the bag. Allow it to flow through your tube to make sure all of the formula goes into your stomach. Rinsing with water also prevents your tube from becoming clogged and helps meet your fluid needs. You can also flush the tube using a syringe and water as shown in the tube feeding video.
5. Clamp the tube. Disconnect the feeding set from your tube and close the plug on your tube.
6. Use medical tape to **secure your feeding tube to your body**. This will help the tube stay in place.
7. 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 are used for 1 day. Follow these steps if you need to use the feeding bag longer due to lack of supplies.

- **After the final feeding of the day**, dissolve about ¼ of a teaspoon of liquid dishwashing soap with hot tap water in a measuring cup or drinking glass.
- Pour the mixture into the feeding bag.
- Recap the bag, close the roller clamp and shake it well.
- Rinse the bag and tubing with tap water until all of the soap is removed. After washing, drain again and store the bag and tubing in the refrigerator inside a sealed plastic bag.

Bolus Feeding Method

You can also use the 60 mL syringe to give yourself formula at home or when travelling. Remove the plunger from one of your syringes to use as a funnel to pour formula into your tube.

- Start with a water flush using a 60 mL syringe with the plunger to gently push the water to clear the tube. Clamp the tube and remove this syringe.
- Attach the syringe without the plunger to the tube. Pour in 30 to 60 mL of formula. Unclamp the tube to allow it to slowly flow through the tube into your stomach. The higher you hold the funnel the faster it will flow. Lower it if it is flowing too quickly.
- Continue pouring formula into the funnel until all of the formula is given.
- **Do not** feed too quickly. Each carton should take 10 to 15 minutes.
- Clamp and remove this syringe.
- Flush the tube with water using the syringe and plunger.

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** take medicines using the feeding bag and tubing. You must use the syringe. Give each medicine one at a time. A pharmacist can review your medicines and tell you which medicines can be placed in your feeding tube.
- Flush your tube with 30 to 60 mL of water **before and after** you put medicines through it.

Clogged Tube

- If the tube becomes clogged, gently flush **warm** water through it with a syringe. You may need to use more pressure or use a push and pull method. Do this by pushing the syringe plunger in and then pulling back on it several times.
- If the tube still does not open, call your nurse in your MD Anderson home clinic **right away** or go to MD Anderson's Acute Cancer Care Center on Floor 1 in the Main Building.

Traveling

When traveling to MD Anderson, remember to bring all your tube feeding supplies and formula with you. These are not available in clinics. You can give yourself a feeding between appointments or during chemo sessions to avoid missing meals.

Emergency Care

- Call your clinic Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- In case of an **emergency**, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency center. The MD Anderson Acute Cancer Care Center is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. From Holcombe Boulevard, turn at Entrance Marker 3. The entrance is on Bates Street for patient drop off only. You can park in Garage 2.

Solving Problems

Use the solutions in the following chart to try to solve tube feeding problems at home. If you cannot solve problems at home, contact your nurse or dietitian.

Problem	Solution
Nausea and vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adjust the formula to flow at a slower rate.• Ask your doctor about 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, contact your care team.
Constipation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase your fluid intake.• If allowed by your doctor, increase your exercise and activity.• Contact your nurse or dietitian if you are not having normal bowel movements or think you may be constipated. They may direct you to take a laxative and stool softener, especially if you are taking pain medicine or anti-nausea medicine. These can make constipation worse.
Cramping	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Let the formula and water come to room temperature before using them.• 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 above.• If it is OK with your doctor, increase your activity level.• Ask your doctor for anti-gas medicine.
Thirst	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If it is OK with your doctor, drink fluids 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, or 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 of your DME company:

The date your order was entered: _____ for _____ months.

For your MD Anderson care team to renew your tube feeding formula or supply order after the order expires, you **must** be under the care and have recently seen an MD Anderson doctor. Your MD Anderson dietitian must re-check your nutritional needs and tube feeding schedule before placing a reorder.

Schedule an appointment within 1 month before your 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 doctor who is managing your care to request a tube feeding prescription.

Contacts

- **Nutrition or tube feeding questions:** Call your dietitian at 713-563-5167.
- **To order formula and supplies and for questions about the pump:** Call your DME company. Dietitians **do not** contact the DME company for you to order each month. If you have confirmed that the DME company should deliver your tube feeding supplies and you do not receive them within 48 hours, call the DME company. Most companies have a 24-hour answering service.

Insurance Coverage

Your insurance may not cover tube feeding formula or supplies. Use this information 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 you may owe.
 - A list of in-network DME providers.
- Speak with the **doctor** who ordered the tube placement. They 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 **you may owe**.

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 including Ensure[®], Boost[®] and 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. Call your dietitian at 713-563-5167 to ask for your formula and the daily amounts you need.

- Formula can also be purchased on the website for the company that manufactures the product. Your local pharmacy may be able to order your formula.

Tube Feeding Supplies: Bags, Tubing and Syringes

- 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 to purchase them online through websites such as [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).
- Check with your doctor or nurse when your feeding tube is placed. Ask them for the size of the feeding bag and syringe you will need so you can search online for a supplier.

Resources

MD Anderson does not endorse these companies. These are for informational purposes only.

Oley Foundation

https://Oley.org/page/Enteral_Donations

The Oley Foundation is a non-profit organization that offers an **equipment and supply exchange** to help connect patients with free supplies and equipment donated by people who no longer need them. The individual requesting the donated supplies arranges pick up or pays the shipping costs.

Order products directly online from these companies:

- Abbott Nutrition: 800-258-7677
[AbbottNutrition.com](https://www.AbbottNutrition.com)
- Nestle Nutrition: 888-240-2713
[NestleNutritionStore.com](https://www.NestleNutritionStore.com)
- General online suppliers, like [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com): Search “tube feeding supplies” or use the specific name of your equipment.

Compare pricing and services offered from these DME providers:

- Amerita Specialty Infusion: 713-843-7700 or 866-417-9946
- Angel Medical Supplies: 713-563-3005
- Aveanna Healthcare: 866-883-1188 or 800-918-0766
www.AveannaMedicalSolutions.com
- Coram Specialty Infusion Services: 877-936-6874 or 1-888-334-7978
Email for refills: Enteralrefill@cvshealth.com
[Coramhc.com/Patients/Billing-and-Supplies-Tube-Feeding](https://www.Coramhc.com/Patients/Billing-and-Supplies-Tube-Feeding)
- Lincare: 713-856-9158
Enteral feeding refills: 866-436-7685
- Option Care Health: 713-794-0599
Enteral feeding refills: 833-510-4500 or 779-213-8180
Email for refills: Enteralrefill@optioncare.com
- Paragon Healthcare Inc., Nutrition Solutions
Nutrition care team: 833-824-1400 or 931-433-9799