

Troubleshooting Your Feeding Tube

Here are some problems that a person could have with a feeding tube. We suggest ways that could help.

Note: Anytime you change your feeding schedule (dose, rate, or water flushes), contact your dietitian to make sure you are still meeting your nutrition needs.

Problem	What to do
Stomach fullness Gas Bloating Cramping	Try any of these actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow down the feeding rate. • Stop feeding for 1 to 2 hours and then try again. • If using opened formula from the fridge, take it out 30 minutes before your feeding. • Talk to your dietitian about trying a different type of formula or changing your schedule.
Sick to your stomach (nausea) Throw up (vomit) Heartburn (reflux)	Try any of these actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop your feed. Wait 1 to 2 hours. If your stomach feels better, restart the feed. • Slow down the feeding rate. • Sit upright or lie at a 45 degree angle during the feed and for at least 30 minutes after the feed. Call your family doctor in any of these situations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Your nausea or vomiting continues for more than 24 hours. ▪ You cannot follow your tube feed schedule. This is especially important if tube feeding is your only source of fluid and you are not able to drink fluids. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ You have signs of dehydration. (See Dehydration section.)
Constipation Having bowel movements less often that are separate hard lumps and difficult to pass	Try any of these actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase how much water you flush through the tube each day. • Ask your dietitian about increasing fluid, fibre, or both to feeds. • Talk to your family doctor or pharmacist about medicines that could help. • If possible, increase your physical activity level.
Feeding tube falls out	Do not try to put it back in yourself. Cover your stoma with a clean gauze pad. Go to the nearest Emergency Room within 2 hours of the tube coming out.

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This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.

Troubleshooting Your Feeding Tube - *continued*

Problem	What to do
Aspiration Accidentally breathe formula or water into your lungs Signs to watch for: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- coughing or choking- wet, gurgly voice- wheezy breathing- lips turn white, gray, or blue	Do both of these actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stop tube feeding immediately.• Sit upright and cough until you can breathe easily. If signs do not go away and you continue to have trouble breathing, go to the nearest Emergency Room or call 9-1-1.
Diarrhea Bowel movements are more often and loose or watery for at least 2 days	Try any of these actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slow down the feeding rate.• Increase how much water you flush through the tube each day so you keep from getting dehydrated.• Ask your dietitian about adjusting how much fibre you have. Call your family doctor in any of these situations: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ You have more than 5 watery bowel movements in 24 hours.▪ You see blood in your stool (poop).▪ You have really bad pain in your abdomen.▪ You have signs of dehydration. (See Dehydration section.) Note: If you are on chemotherapy, it can cause diarrhea. Check with your cancer doctor (oncologist) if you have questions or concerns.
Dehydration Signs to watch for: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- small amounts of dark yellow urine- more thirsty- sudden loss of weight- dizzy when stand up or sit up	Increase how much water you flush through the tube each day. If you continue to have any signs of dehydration after increasing your water flushes, call your family doctor or dietitian.
Leaking around the stoma Skin around the stoma irritated	Try any of these actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give the flushes slowly and gently.• Follow the directions for cleaning your stoma each day.• Clean your stoma more often. Call your family doctor if you notice any of these signs of infection: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The skin around the tube is hot, red, swollen, and hurts.▪ There is thick, cloudy fluid coming from the stoma.▪ There is white or yellow-green fluid coming from the stoma.