

## Gastrostomy tubes

A Gastrostomy tube is a small tube that is surgically placed through the stomach wall into the stomach. A Gastrostomy tube or G tube is used to pass food or medications directly into the stomach bypassing the mouth and esophagus. G tubes are usually used for someone who is unable to eat or is at risk for aspiration (food or liquids going into the lungs). Other reasons include persons who are not eating adequately or may need the G tube for other medical reasons. Using it is very simple and usually results in very little complication. Here are a few tips on using and caring for a G-tube.

- The G-tube needs to be cleaned daily to prevent infection.
- For the first 3 days after the tube is placed, clean the skin around the G tube with saline and then let air dry.
- After 3 days, you may simply shower and let the water run over the place where the tube enters your skin.
- After every time that it is cleaned be sure to check for signs of infection, such as,
  - Increased tenderness or pain
  - Redness or swelling around where the tube enters the skin.
  - Any drainage that is green or smelly that comes from the surgical site.
  - Also any significant increase in temperature may be a sign of infection.

If any of these symptoms are present, the doctor should be called for further assessment. Keep in mind that some redness is normal.

To prevent the tube from becoming blocked remember to flush the tube with water before and after every use. If a tube come loose or completely out, notify your caregiver as soon as possible, the tube must be replaced within 12 hours to prevent closure of the surgical site. To prevent the tube from coming completely out be sure to secure the tube with tape.

Other reasons to call the caregiver include

- Bleeding around the site or if food or gastric juices are seeping out around the surgical site.

- If it is leaking, the tube may need to be replaced with a bigger size to prevent this from happening.

As long as good hand washing and correct care of the site are practiced, G tubes are very easy to use and a safe way to provide nutrition when other methods are not working.

