



# Nasogastric (NG) Tube Feeding

## A patient's guide

### What is nasogastric tube feeding?

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A nasogastric (NG) tube is a thin, soft, plastic, flexible tube which is inserted through the nose, down the back of the throat and into the stomach. This tube can be used to provide a patient with liquid feed, fluids and medications.

### What are the benefits of nasogastric tube feeding?

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If a patient is unable to eat or drink adequate amounts, NG feeding can be used as a short term measure to provide all the liquid nutritional feed and fluids required, to prevent dehydration and weight loss.

### What are the risks of nasogastric tube feeding?

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The main risk associated with NG feeding is the tube accidentally being inserted into the lungs instead of the stomach, or becoming displaced after insertion. NG tubes can become displaced from coughing and vomiting. If a patient is fed into the lungs instead of stomach there is a high chance of infection.

In order to reduce this risk, the position of the tube will be checked each time before use. This is done by checking the pH (acidity) of fluid drawn up from the tube, or by X-Ray in some circumstances.

### How is the tube inserted?

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The NG tube will be inserted by a trained member of staff, usually a nurse.

1. The patient will be asked to sit upright.
2. The tip of the tube may be lubricated with water to help the tube insert easily.
3. The tube will then be inserted through the nostril down into the stomach.
4. Securing the tube to the patient's cheek will help to prevent the tube from becoming displaced.
5. The tube position is then confirmed – by checking pH, or by X-Ray if required.

This procedure can be uncomfortable but should be painless.



## What happens after the tube has been inserted?

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Once the tube has been inserted and the position confirmed the tube can be used for feeding. The dietitian will prescribe a specific amount of feed and this will be given to the patient either as **continuous** or **bolus** feeding. The dietitian will decide which method of feeding is most appropriate for the patient. This feed will contain all the nutrients that the patient needs.

- Patients who are fed by **continuous feeding** will have their liquid feed delivered via a pump at a prescribed rate over a certain number of hours.
- Patients who are fed by **bolus feeding** will be given their liquid feed via syringe at different intervals during the day.

As part of the patient's feeding regimen, the dietitian may also prescribe additional water flushes to ensure that the patient is adequately hydrated. These flushes will be given via syringe several times throughout the day.

## Can a patient still eat or drink whilst being fed by tube?

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If the patient does not have any swallowing problems they may be able to eat and drink whilst being fed by tube, after having been assessed by a speech and language therapist.

**For further information please speak to your nurse, doctor or dietitian.**

### Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or [whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net)

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