

A Parents' Guide to Understanding:

Nasogastric Tube Feeding your Baby

If you're reading this information it probably means that your baby needs a Nasogastric (NG) tube to support them with feeding. It also means that you've either expressed an interest in tube feeding or the neonatal team feel that it may be beneficial for you to learn how to tube feed your baby. A NG tube is a thin tube passed down a nostril to the stomach. It is fixed to the nose with tape. The milk drips slowly down the tube by gravity until it reaches the stomach

Why does my baby need an NG Tube

There are many reasons your baby may need support with feeding via an NG Tube.

- Your baby may have a surgical condition that means he/she can only have certain measured volumes of milk which need to go directly into their stomach.
- Your baby may have been born early or small, therefore has not yet fully developed. A baby in the womb only develops the ability to suck when he/she has reached 32 weeks gestation and is not able to coordinate sucking, swallowing and breathing all at the same time, until around 34-36 weeks gestation. Until then, and sometimes longer, your baby will need help with feeding to ensure they get enough calories and other nutrients so they can grow and develop.
- Your baby may be requiring treatments or medicines that make them too sleepy to breast or bottle feed. While they are this sleepy a NG tube will help them to receive the nutritious milk feeds to help them grow and get better.

How do I feed my baby with an NG Tube

You will be given full support from the staff on the Neonatal Unit to learn how to give NG Tube feeds to your baby safely.

- Gather all of the required equipment
- Ensure your baby and you are comfortable, with your baby held securely on your knee or in the incubator/cot. Your baby should be positioned with his or her head at a higher level than their stomach. Talk to your baby just as if you were breast/ bottle feeding
- Check the position of the feeding tube. Is the tape stuck down? Is the tube at the same marker that it usually is? If yes, attach the syringe to the feeding tube and gently draw back a small amount of fluid and place onto the pH indicator strip. If the pH strip changes to a pH 5.5 or below the tube is in the stomach.
- Remove the plunger from the syringe that you plan to use to give the feed. Attach the empty syringe to the NG tube. Pour the appropriate amount of milk into the syringe, use the plunger to gently start the milk flowing. Once the required amount of milk has been given, remove the syringe from the NG tube. Replace the cap onto the end of the NG tube.
- NG feeds are gravity fed. The higher the syringe is held, the faster the milk will flow. It is much nicer for your baby to be able to see your face when you are feeding them it helps to build your relationship and also allows you to check they are coping with the feed.
- Throughout the feed, you must watch your baby to make sure they remain settled, show no signs of distress (coughing, spluttering, losing consciousness or changing colour) and the NG tube stays in the same position as when you started the feed.

What do I have to do to be able to NG Tube feed my baby?

Before you are able to give your baby unsupervised NG Tube feeds, you will work with the Staff on the Neonatal Units to learn the procedure safely. You will be able to watch the staff give your baby a minimum of three tube feeds, during this time the staff will teach you what they are doing.

Once you feel confident and comfortable with the procedure, you will start taking part in tube feeds with the support of a nurse. Once you and the nurse feel you are happy with the process and you are able to describe what you are doing and why you will be asked to sign a form to say you are happy that you have had full support and training. Each day you can decide which feeds you feel you will be able to do, this way between you and your nurse for the day your baby will receive all of its feeds on time.

If at **ANY TIME** you decide that this is something you would rather **not do**, that's absolutely fine. However, if you do decide you would like to learn how to tube feed your baby, you'll be fully supported and won't be expected to undertake the procedure until you feel confident and competent.

Note: If your baby has its gastric tube placed in its mouth it may be referred to as an Orogastric (OG) Tube. These should be treated in the same way but be mindful that little finger often try to pull at them!



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