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Tube-Feeding Troubleshooting

It's not unusual to experience problems now and then with tube feeding, but with this helpful information, you may be able to resolve them on your own. Please consult with your healthcare provider with any issues or concerns you may experience with your tube feeding.

The following is a brief description of common problems, possible causes and some steps you can take to troubleshoot tube-feeding problems.

Issue/Probable Cause	Suggested Solution
CONSTIPATION <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not enough water is being given with your feedings• No fiber, or not enough fiber, in your formula• Unable to engage in enough physical activity• Medications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take additional water through your feeding tube as instructed by your healthcare professional.• Check with your doctor or dietitian regarding use of a fiber-containing formula.• If permitted, increase your physical activity.• Ask your healthcare professional to review your medications.
DIARRHEA <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medications• Formula is being fed too fast• Formula is too cold• Rate of feeding is too fast• Formula may be spoiled or contaminated by bacteria• No fiber, or not enough fiber, in your formula• Intolerance to the formula	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try to relax during the feeding.• Allow the formula to warm to room temperature before administering.• Contact your healthcare professional for advice on slowing the feeding rate.• Do not use formula that has been opened and left:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– at room temperature for longer than the manufacturer's recommendation.– in the refrigerator for longer than 48 hours.• Check with your doctor or dietitian regarding use of a fiber containing formula.• Ask your healthcare professional to review your medications.
DEHYDRATION <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not taking enough water• Frequent diarrhea• Prolonged fever• Perspiring heavily	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take the recommended amount of water every day before and after your feedings.• If you are experiencing fever, diarrhea, heavy sweating, consult your healthcare professional regarding a change in your daily water requirements.

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Tube-Feeding Troubleshooting (Continued)

Issue/Probable Cause	Suggested Solution
STOMACH UPSET <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formula is being fed too fast• Formula is cold• Lying flat while taking the feeding• Exercising or engaging in too much activity right after a feeding• Intolerance to the formula	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consult your healthcare professional for advice on slowing the rate of feeding.• Allow the formula to warm to room temperature before administering.• Make sure you are following directions for the prescribed amount of formula and/or correct flow rate.• Sit or lie at a 30-degree angle (about the height of two pillows) during the feeding and for 30 to 60 minutes after the feeding.• If directed by your healthcare professional, check stomach residual before re-starting the next feeding.• DO NOT start a feeding if the residual exceeds the volume recommended by your healthcare professional.
CLOGGED FEEDING TUBE <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kink or bend in your feeding tube• Dried formula or medication is blocking your feeding tube	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check for kinks or bends in your feeding tube.• Flush your tube before and after each feeding.• Dissolve medications in warm water before administering through your feeding tube.• Flush your tube with warm water before and after administering your medications.• If tube is blocked, do not try to remove the blockage yourself. Consult with your healthcare professional for directions on how to proceed.

Making your home tube feeding a pleasant experience

It is very important to discuss your tube-feeding requirements with your healthcare provider so that you can smoothly transition into a safe tube-feeding regimen at home. For any issues you may experience, it is always recommended to reach your health care provider. The tips and tools provided above can help you troubleshoot some of the possible issues outlined here can help you to manage your day-to-day routine. In addition, the transition to home tube feeding requires some adjustments and there are ways to make them easier. For example, talking to friends and family about your tube feeding may make you more comfortable with the transition. Or, consider scheduling your feedings during family meal time.

If you choose to administer your feedings at other times, be sure to continue to engage in family and other social activities. The adjustment may require time and patience, but soon it will become a routine.

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