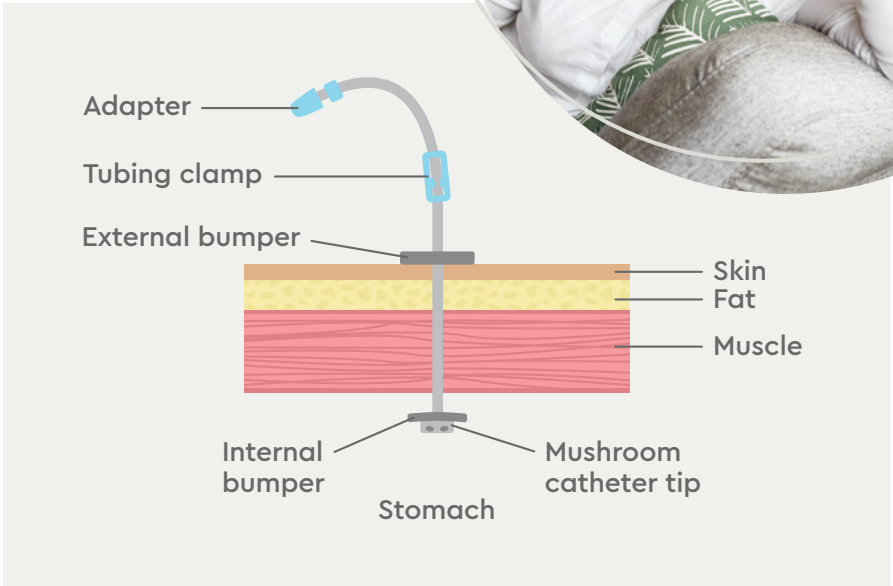


PEG tube management



When undergoing surgery or radiation therapy for head and neck cancers, your ability to maintain a healthy diet and weight is crucial. However, treatment can often cause side effects that impact swallowing, taste and eating.

In these cases, your care team may recommend you get a **percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy tube** to maintain your nutrition. Better known as a **PEG tube**, this is a tube that can provide food, liquids and medications directly into your stomach.

A gastroenterologist, surgeon or interventional radiologist will be able to insert a PEG tube, and our team can help provide recommendations for local providers to refer you to. While this document is meant to help you have a basic understanding of how to use and clean your feeding tube, **it is important that you follow your instructions from the care team that inserted the PEG tube instead of relying independently on this resource.**

How to feed yourself with a PEG tube

1. Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Flush your PEG tube prior to inserting any nutritional supplement. Typically, it is recommended that you flush the tube with 30 to 60 mL of warm water, but your gastroenterology team can provide specifics for your individual needs.
 - » Make sure that your tube is clamped before opening the port. Place the syringe firmly into the port before opening the clamp to flush the tube.
3. While sitting upright, insert the syringe into the feeding port of the PEG tube. Push the syringe plunger gently down to administer the nutritional supplement.
4. Once all nutrition has been received through the tube, it is recommended that you again flush the tube with 30 to 60 mL of warm water.
 - » Make sure that you clamp the tube before disconnecting the syringe.
5. Dispose of anything that is not marked as washable and reusable.
6. Wash your hands again with soap and water.
7. Remain sitting or standing upright for 60 minutes after administering a feeding. It is important that you do not lay down for an hour after your feeding as it increases the risk of aspiration, which is where liquid can come up from your stomach and enter your lungs, causing pneumonia.

How to care for your PEG tube

1. Check your PEG tube daily:
 - » Make sure the bumper, or the plastic disc, is right up against your skin. Contact the team that inserted the tube if the disc feels tighter or looser than normal.
 - » Make sure that the length of the tube is the same as it has been, and not getting longer or shorter. Contact the team that inserted the tube if you notice any changes with the tubing.
2. Change the dressing behind the bumper as instructed by the team that inserted the PEG tube. In many cases, it will be recommended that these dressings are changed daily. Be careful not to force the dressing into place.
3. Clean the skin around the PEG tube gently each day with soap and water. Do not use hydrogen peroxide or any cleansers not approved by the team that inserted the PEG tube.
4. Tape the tube down to your skin to avoid it being tugged at or breaking down the skin.

Other things you should know

- Having a PEG tube in place doesn't mean you are not able to eat or drink small amounts of food and beverage by mouth. Talk to the team who inserted the tube about how much you can feed yourself orally and any restrictions you should follow.
- Continue to practice good oral hygiene even if you are not consuming food by mouth. Make sure you are brushing and flossing your teeth regularly. Additionally, there are also special swabs that can be used to keep the mouth clean and moist.
- Most liquid medication can be administered by your PEG tube. However, talk to your gastroenterologist before giving yourself any new medications through your PEG tube.
- PEG tubes can be used for a few months to a few years. If a replacement tube is needed, the provider who inserted the tube can help change it for a new one.

- As your mouth and throat symptoms improve, your PEG tube management team will recommend additional nutrition by mouth. During this period of increased oral intake, the PEG tube may remain in place but not be used regularly. When you are eating a more normal oral intake regularly, the tube may be removed.
 - » It is important that you still keep up daily hygiene and flushing of the tube even when you are not using it, until it can be removed.

When to contact your provider

- If you are bleeding or leaking continuously through the PEG tube site
- If your PEG tube has been clogged and you are unable to flush it or use it
 - » Never stick a wire or other object down the tube to try and dislodge a clog.
- If you have extreme pain, tenderness, swelling or redness at the PEG tube site
- If it appears the skin around the PEG tube is infected
- If there is a foul odor coming from the PEG tube
- If you run a fever over 100.5°F for 24 hours or more
- If you are vomiting for over 8 hours or have been nauseous for over 24 hours
- If you have any extreme changes in your bowel habits
- If you are rapidly losing weight
- Any other instances your gastroenterology team recommends you contact them

Contact the team who inserted your PEG tube if you have any questions.

