

HOW DO I UNBLOCK A GASTROSTOMY TUBE?

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Thanks to Nutricia for sharing their information with us

- Do not attempt this if you have not received the relevant training!

IMPORTANT INFORMATION BEFORE TRYING TO UNBLOCK A GASTROSTOMY TUBE

If you **have not** been trained to advance and rotate the tube, contact the Nutricia Homeward Nurse for training and instructions on how to proceed.

Check the cm graduation markings at skin level remain unchanged. If cm graduation markings have changed, **do not** attempt to unblock the tube and contact the managing healthcare professional immediately for instructions on how to proceed.

Check the tube advances and rotates easily as per training provided by the Nutricia Homeward Nurse.

If the tube **does not** advance and rotate freely, do not attempt to unblock the tube until you have received instructions from the managing healthcare professional or Nutricia Homeward Nurse.

NOTE: You must never try to unblock a nasogastric tube

- If there is any resistance when trying to flush a gastrostomy tube, you must not force water into the tube, this could damage the tube and make it unsafe to use.
- Check the clamp on the feeding tube is open. If not, open the clamp and try to use the tube again. If the tube is still blocked, proceed with unblocking using the steps below.
- It is important to contact your Nutricia Homeward Nurse if you need any additional training.
- Before and after handling the tube wash your hands with liquid soap and water and dry them thoroughly.
- You will need:
 - 60ml enteral feeding syringe
 - Warm water, amount and type as recommended by your healthcare professional.
- Fill the 60ml enteral feeding syringe with warm water (type and volume as recommended by your healthcare professional).

- Close the clamp, if present. Open the cap and securely connect the syringe to the feeding tube.
- Open the clamp, if present.
- Using a gentle push-pull technique, try to flush the tube. You might need to keep doing this for a good few minutes.
- You can also gently squeeze the tube between your fingers along the length of the tube as far as possible.
- Repeat these steps as required.
- Be sure to change the water in the syringe to ensure it remains warm.
- You can also use soda water for this purpose.
- Unblocking a tube can take as long as 20-30 minutes but it is achievable most of the time.
- If you manage to unblock the tube, ensure the patient is positioned comfortably at an angle of at least 30-45 degrees and flush the tube with water, either via plunge or gravity method.
- Close the clamp, if present.
- Disconnect the syringe from the feeding tube.
- Ensure the patient remains in this position of 30-45 degrees for at least one hour post flush.
- If the blockage persists contact the managing healthcare professional for further instructions on how to proceed.

REMEMBER in order to prevent blockages:

- Always flush the feeding tube before and after administration of any tube feed or medication.
- Always flush the feeding tube immediately following the completion of a pump feed.
- Ensure the whole length of the feeding tube is cleared.

Do not use acidic solutions, such as fruit juices or cola, as they can curdle the enteral tube feeding and make the blockage worse.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

You are advised to contact your managing healthcare professional immediately if, for any reason, your medication or enteral tube feed needs to be delayed or not given due to problems with your feeding tube, and nothing can be given by mouth.

