



danutips for Enteral Care

Best practices for flushing a feeding tube

Flushing a feeding tube with water is essential for hydration and to maintain tube patency. Regular water flushes help keep tubes free of clogs so nutrition can flow freely and ensure proper nutrition delivery. Regular, gentle water flushing is key to long-term tube feeding care.

Here are the steps and key points for best practice:



Maintaining cleanliness

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before handling the feeding tube or syringe. Wearing disposable gloves is standard practice in the hospital as extra protection.



Choose the right water

Clean, room-temperature drinking water or purified water is usually adequate for most people. Sterile water is usually recommended for people with weakened immune systems, in hospitals, and where the quality of the drinking water is unreliable.

In the home setting, either tap or bottled water is acceptable if it is free of contaminants.



Measure the right amount of water

For adults, the recommended minimum flush amount is 20 ml, but the specific amount depends on the patient's age, fluid needs and restrictions, on hospital policy and healthcare provider instructions.

For paediatric patients, amounts vary depending on age and weight; consult with a healthcare professional for specifics.

In neonates, flushes are used sparingly because there is little room for providing non-nutritive fluids. Consult with your prescriber for specific volumes in these cases.





Use the correct connectors

Always use a clean ENFit® syringe to flush an ENFit® feeding tube.

When flushing a gastrostomy button, always use an extension set between the button and the syringe - never connect a syringe directly to the button, as this may cause damage.



Flush the tube regularly

- Flush before and after each feeding to prevent clogging.
- Flush before and after administering medication to remove medication residue, to prevent clogging and to avoid an interaction between the nutrient solution and the medication.
- Flush the tube before and after any pureed food provided through the tube.
- If multiple medications are given, flush between each medication.
- Flush every 4 to 6 hours during continuous feeding to maintain patency.
- When not in use, flush the tube every 8 hours or at least once daily in the home setting.



Use the correct technique

When syringe flushing, use a gentle, slow and steady push of the plunger rather than a single, strong push. If you encounter resistance, this could indicate a blockage or damage to the tube.

Flush slowly, as fast flushing may cause discomfort or pressure in the stomach or intestines.



Monitor and record

Document each water flush (timing, amount of water used, and any issues) to track hydration and identify potential problems early.

Disclaimer: This information is not a substitute for professional medical care. In case of problems, complications, or questions, always contact your medical professional.

References:

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