

## CARE OF NASOGASTRIC TUBE

### What is a nasogastric tube?

A nasogastric tube is a special tube that carries food and medicine to the stomach through the nose. It is used when a person is unable to swallow food through the mouth.

### How to care for a nasogastric tube?

It is important to take good care of the nasogastric tube so that it works properly.

- Wash your hands with soap and water, before and after handling the nasogastric tube.
- Maintain good oral hygiene.
- Ensure that the tube does not slip out and is secured firmly on the nose and cheek.
- Take good care of the skin around the nostrils to prevent irritation and sores.
- Prevent children from touching or pulling the tube.
- Adhere to the appointment date and time to change the nasogastric tube.

### How to feed through a nasogastric tube?

- Sit upright before and after feeding.
- Confirm the correct placement of the tube by:
  - Measuring the external length of the tube. It should be the same as the external length when the tube was first inserted.
  - Ensuring the tube is not coiled at the back of the throat.
  - Ensuring there is at least 1 ml of gastric aspirate and the appearance of the gastric content is colourless or grassy green, with or without food residue or sediments.
  - Checking the pH of the gastric aspirate with a pH indicator strip. It should be between pH 0 to 5.5.
- Do not force the feeds by using a syringe plunger, allow it to flow in slowly by gravity.
- Consult the pharmacist for advice on whether medication can be crushed (as certain medications cannot be crushed). Dissolve crushed medication in water before feeding.
- Flush the tube with 15 to 30 ml of water after feeding. The volume of water used for flushing depends on the overall tolerance of daily fluid allowance as recommended by the dietician or doctor.
- Maintain an elevation of head of bed at 30 degrees or more for about 1 hour after feeding.
- Do not feed if the person appears to have difficulty in breathing is coughing, choking, restless, drowsy, confused, nauseous or vomiting.
- Do not attempt to change or re-insert the tube on your own, unless you have been trained to do so.

## **When should I consult the doctor?**

Seek medical attention immediately if any of the following occurs:

- Fever.
- Difficulty breathing.
- Abdominal distension or bloatedness.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Diarrhoea or constipation.
- PH indicator shows a reading of six or more.
- Blood or coffee ground aspirates.
- Dislodged tube.