

Information for patients and carers

Nasogastric Tube Insertion, Care and Management



What does NG stand for?

NG tube stands for nasogastric tube.

- Naso – through the nose
- Gastric – down to stomach

Introduction

Following a discussion with your medical team, you may have been referred for consideration of nasogastric tube feeding; this may be due to a medical condition, swallowing difficulty or for another reason.

What is a NG tube?

A NG tube is a feeding tube which passes through your nose and down to your stomach.

There are many reasons you may need a NG tube. These can include the following:

- You are unable to eat and drink enough to meet your nutrition and hydration needs
- You have difficulties, or it is anticipated you will have difficulties, swallowing food, and fluids for a period of time
- If you have a progressive type of illness and are currently well nourished, a NG tube can help to maintain this status as the illness progresses

It can be used for the following:

- A way to take specialised feed, water and medication to provide you with support to meet your nutritional need

- To supplement your intake by mouth
- Nasogastric tubes are a fine bore feeding tube which are usually used in the short term, although some patients choose to have them longer term

How is the NG inserted?

The nasogastric tube will be placed by a competent practitioner on the ward or in a clinic setting, depending on the individual circumstances.

Prior to your consent and insertion, the procedure, risks and benefits will be discussed with you.

A measurement will be taken to determine the insertion length of the NG tube. The practitioner will then perform an examination of your nostrils with their little finger to determine the best nostril for insertion. The NG tube will then be passed via the chosen nostril to the back of the throat and then down the oesophagus to your stomach.

How is the NG confirmed to be in a safe place?

There are two ways to safely confirm the position of the tip of the nasogastric tube within the stomach:

- An aspirate pH check (with CE marked pH strips)
- Chest X-Ray

An 'aspirate' pH check of 5.5 or less, this confirms safe gastric placement, and the tube is safe for use. If an aspirate cannot be obtained, or if the pH aspirate is higher than 5.5 a chest x-ray may need to be ordered.

If you are at home and you are experiencing problems with confirming that your NG tube is in a safe place, contact your nutrition specialist nurse, dietitian or homecare company nurse.

What are the benefits of having a NG?

- Your nutrition and hydration status can be improved or maintained
- It can be used for either short or long-term artificial feeding depending on why you need the NG tube
- After speaking to your doctor or pharmacist, any medications you may need may be given via the NG

What are the risks when having a NG inserted?

Having a NG tube is a routine procedure that carries a low risk of complications. However as with any medical intervention, there are risks involved which must be weighed against the benefits.

These risks include:

- Pain or discomfort
- Bleeding
- Failure to place
- Placement into the oesophagus
- Placement into the lung
- Pneumothorax

What happens if the NG tube is placed into the lung?

Feed through an NG tube inadvertently placed within the lung must not happen and safety checks are made to ensure this doesn't happen.

If a nasogastric tube is placed into the lung, the practitioner should not be able to obtain a safe (less than 5.5) pH reading aspirate, in which case a chest x-ray would be arranged. If the NG tube is in the lung, it would then be removed.

What does The NG look like?

The NG tube will be visible to your face but can be comfortably supported with tape.



Routine care of your NG

NG tubes are usually only used for Short term; we would only change your NG tube if you were experiencing problems with it, or it required changing. NG tubes can be kept longer term if they are well cared for.

Each time your NG tube is accessed, you must check the pH to confirm the safe placement of your tube. Once a pH confirms a safe position, you should flush your tube with water before using it. You should also flush your tube after feed or after any medications. If your feed is running, check the position marker at the nostril has not changed.

If you are unable to get a pH or you have problems, you should contact your nutrition specialist nurse, or dietitian.

The area around your nostril should be cleaned every day with soap and water.

Will I still be able to eat and drink?

If you were eating and drinking before the procedure you should be able to carry on eating and drinking until your doctor or speech and language therapist tells you differently.

If you cannot eat and drink, it is important that you look after your mouth as it can become dry, and plaque can build up. Frequent mouth care is important, and you should still brush your teeth as normal.

What if I have problems with the NG when I get home?

Potential problems associated with NG are:

- The tube becomes blocked

- The tube becomes dislodged
- Pain around the nostrils
- Redness around the nostrils
- Broken or blocked access ports

You can contact the specialist nutrition nurses with any problems or queries about your tube.

What happens if I do not require my NG anymore?

Arrangements can be made for you to come and have your NG removed. Removal does not require a hospital stay as this can be done during a routine clinic appointment.

If you have any queries or questions about any of the information you have read in this leaflet, please contact the nutrition nurses for advice.

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact:

Nutrition Nurses: **01772 523057** (Monday to Friday 8am-4pm)

07985 436325 (Weekends and Bank Holidays 8am-5pm)

Dietitians: **01772 522467** (Monday to Friday 8am-4pm)

Please leave your name and number on the answer machine and we will call you back.

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk

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www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

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Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.

This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.

Department: Nutrition

Division: Surgery

Production date: November 2024

Review date: November 2027

JR 1230 v1