

Family Education Sheet

Giving Your Child Gravity Feeds and Medications through a Gastrostomy Tube (G-Tube)



Boston Children's Hospital
Until every child is well™

Patient and Family Education
www.childrenshospital.org

A gastrostomy tube (G-tube) is used to give your child medicine or food when it cannot be taken by mouth. Figure 1 shows the tube placed in the stomach. You can use a syringe to give the feed without a pump. This is called gravity feeding. It takes about 5–10 minutes.



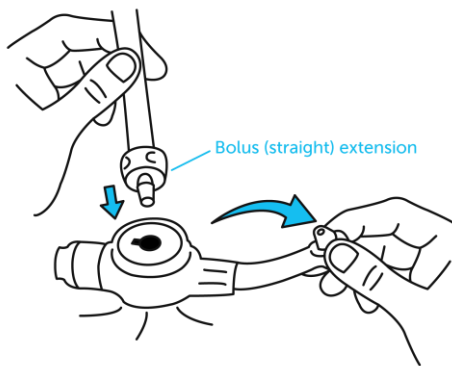
Figure 1

How do I get ready to give a gravity feeding?

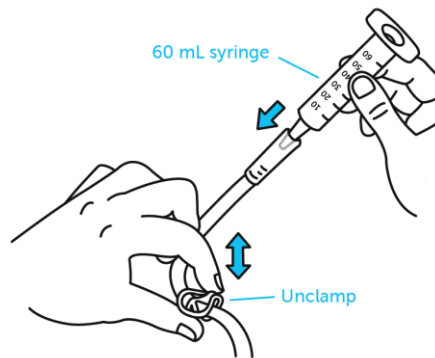
- 1 Wash your hands.
 - 2 Gather these items:
 - 30–60 mL syringe
 - Measuring cup
 - A small cup of water
 - Formula (at room temperature)
- For button G-tube:
- Straight extension set

IMPORTANT NOTE: *If you have concerns about how to best position your child during a feeding, please talk with your primary care provider.*

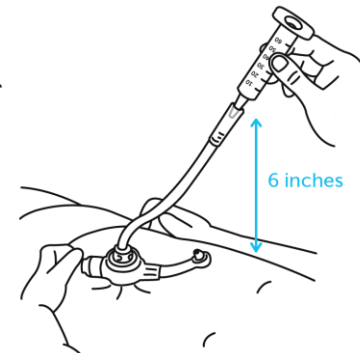
How do I give a gravity feeding through a G-tube?



- 1 Open the cap on the G-tube feeding port. If your child has a button G-tube, insert the straight extension set. Otherwise, skip this step.



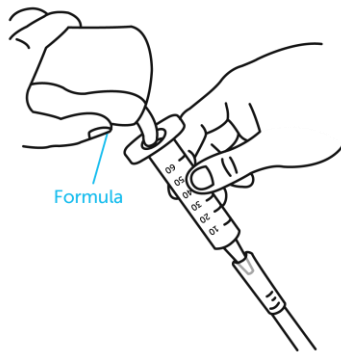
- 2 Remove the plunger from the syringe and put the syringe into the end of the tube and unclamp.



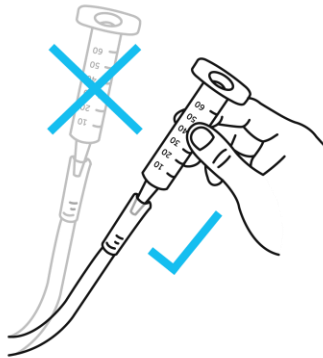
- 3 Hold the syringe no more than 6 inches above your child's stomach. Pause and let the tube vent.

*You may vent the tube anytime your child seems uncomfortable, gassy or belly seems bloated. If formula comes into the syringe during venting, wait for it to go back into the stomach before removing syringe.

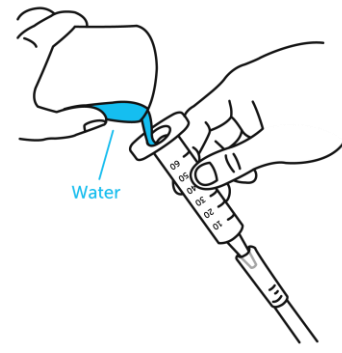
How do I give a gravity feed through my child's G-tube? (continued)



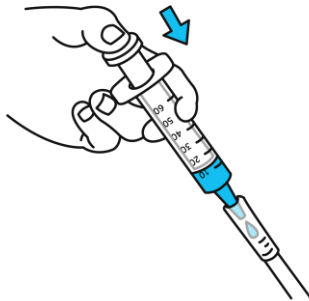
4 Pour pre-measured formula into the syringe. Continue to pour formula into the syringe slowly as it empties.



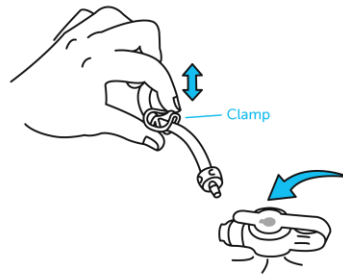
5 Each feeding should flow in over a few minutes. Holding the syringe higher makes it flow faster, which you don't want to happen. Holding it lower makes it flow more slowly, which is good.



6 When the feeding ends, pour water into the syringe to flush the tubing to clear it of formula. Your provider will prescribe the amount of water to use.



7 If you need to, replace the plunger into the syringe to gently push the rest of the water into the stomach.

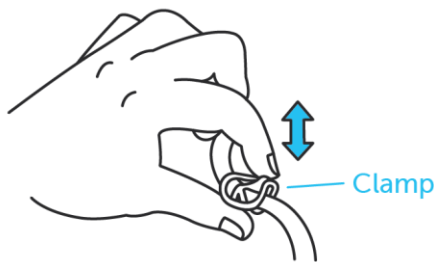


8 Remove the syringe and the extension set, if applicable. Put the cap on the feeding tube port.

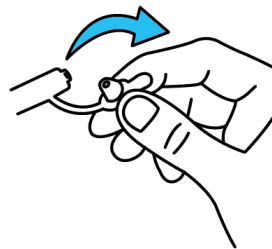


9 Wash the syringe (and extension set, if used) with warm water and mild soap and rinse well. Let air dry and store in a clean area until next use.

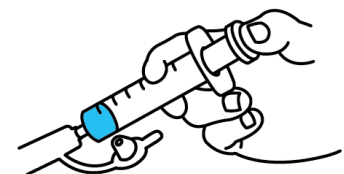
How do I give my child medicine through the G-tube?



Note: Remember to clamp the G-tube whenever attaching or removing a syringe so food or medicine doesn't flow out.



1 Clamp the G-tube and open the small medication port.

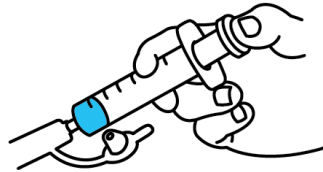


2 Attach a syringe filled with the prescribed amount of water and flush tube. Remove syringe.

How do I give my child medicine through the G-tube? (continued)



- 3 Attach medication syringe. Keep a finger over the feeding port to keep it from popping open as you push the medicine in.



- 4 Remove medication syringe. Attach another syringe with water to flush the medication through.



- 5 Remove syringe. Close the medication port.

Liquid medicine

- Give liquid medicine whenever possible through the G-tube. **Always flush** with at least 3 mL of water (unless you have been told a different amount) **before and after giving medicine** to avoid clogging the G-tube.
- Flush with extra water after giving thick medicine to help keep the G-tube from clogging. If your child is on a fluid restriction, talk to your doctor or nurse about how much water to use.

Tablets and capsules

- If medicine is only available in tablet or capsule form, check with your pharmacist and doctor to be sure it can be safely crushed or dissolved (mixed with water). Pills should be crushed into a fine powder and **completely dissolved in water** before giving through the G-tube. You can buy a pill crusher at any drug store.
- **Do not mix medicines or add medicines into formula unless told to do so by your child's doctor. Some medicines do not mix well together.**

Important tips

- When making formula from powder, make only enough for 24 hours and refrigerate. Throw away any leftover formula 24 hours after mixing it.
- Ready-to-feed formulas can be used up to 48 hours once opened. Refrigerate after opening.
- Do not use formula after the expiration date on the side of the bottle or can.
- If the G-tube feeding is in addition to feeding by mouth, let your child eat before giving the feeding.
- Brush your child's teeth, gums and tongue at least 2 times each day.
- Offer your baby a pacifier to suck on during feedings. This will help your baby get used to sucking while feeding. If your child is older, speak to your child's doctor or nurse about ways you can stimulate your child's mouth while feeding through the tube.
- You can buy reusable syringes online instead of getting them from your home supply company if you choose to.

When should I call my child's doctor?

Stop the feeding right away and call 911 if your child has intense coughing, blueness around the lips or difficulty breathing.

Call your child's doctor if your child:

- Vomits (throws up) after each feeding
- Seems uncomfortable with feedings
- Has diarrhea or cramping
- Has a problem with the tube (clogging, granulation, etc.)

Call if you have questions or concerns.

Contact us

Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.: Call the Gastroenterology Department at 617-355-6058.

Weeknights from 4:30 p.m.– 8 a.m., weekends and holidays: Call the Page Operator at 617-355-6000 and ask to speak with the GI doctor on call.