

## The Nutrition Team

# Checking the position of nasogastric feeding tubes – children and adults

### Why is it important to check the position of the nasogastric feeding tube?

It is important to check the position of the tube before each feed to ensure that feed goes directly into the stomach and not into the lungs. The tube should also be checked after coughing or vomiting to ensure it has not become dislodged.

### How can I check the position of the nasogastric feeding tube?

The most reliable way to check the position of the tube is to measure the pH (acidity) of the stomach content. This can be done using pH indicator paper. Normal stomach acidity is pH 1-5. For children, use a 20 or 50 ml syringe. For adults, use a 50 ml syringe.

#### Follow the instructions below:

1. Wash your hands before and after checking the tube position
2. Remove the cap from the tube
3. Attach a syringe containing air (1-5ml for infants and children; 10-20mls for adults) into the feeding tube. Flush the air down the tube to remove any water or feed from the tube
4. Draw back with the syringe to obtain stomach contents (this is called 'aspirating' the tube)
5. Take the pH paper and place a few drops of the stomach contents onto it
6. The pH paper has a colour code indicating the colour change of each pH reading; from pH 1-5 (acid), through pH 7 (neutral) to pH 14 (alkaline)
7. Match the colour change of your paper with the colour code on the pack to identify the pH of the stomach contents
8. A pH reading of 1-5 indicates an acid reaction, which means the tube is correctly positioned in the stomach.

**Remember: Keep pH strips or paper clean and dry in the sealed container.**

### What if it is not possible to obtain fluid to check the pH?

1. Check the tube length to see if it appears to have moved since it was first put in
2. Turn the person (or ask someone to help you) onto their right side, if this is possible
3. Inject air down the tube (1-5ml for infants and children; 10-20mls for adults)
4. Draw back the syringe to obtain stomach contents
5. If the person is allowed to drink, let them try, wait for a few minutes and try aspirating again.

### What if I get a pH reading of more than 5?

If the person has just had a feed wait for up to one hour and test again. If the person is on medication which reduces the acid in the stomach, you may also get a pH reading of more than 5. It is important that you speak to your nurse or doctor to find out if this is normal.

## What if I am still unable to obtain stomach contents?

If you are still unable to obtain stomach contents, or the pH is above 5, you should contact your community nurse or hospital professional. Details can be found in your "Tube Feeding at Home" details sheet.

## For more information:

- You can call NHS Direct, a 24-hour nurse advice and health information service, on 0845 4647 or visit [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) for England or [www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk) for Wales.
- The NPSA was set up by the government to improve patient safety in the NHS in England and Wales. For more information about the NPSA's work, visit [www.npsa.nhs.uk](http://www.npsa.nhs.uk)
- The Nutrition Team: Department of Clinical Nutrition, Box 201a, Addenbrooke's Hospital, 01223 216037

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本文件也可應要求，製作成其他語文或特大字體版本，也可製作成錄音帶。

Cantonese

આ દસ્તાવેજ વિનંતી કરવાથી બીજી ભાષાઓ, મોટા છાપેલા અક્ષરો અથવા ઓડિઓ રચનામાં પણ મળી રહેશે.

Gujarati

A richiesta questo documento è anche disponibile in altre lingue, a caratteri grandi e in formato audio.

Italian

ئەم بەلگەییە ھەرۆھە بە زمانەکانی کە، بە چاچی درشت و بە شریتی تەسجیل دەس دەکەوێت

Kurdish

درخواست پر یہ دستاویز دیگر زبانوں میں، بڑے حروف کی چھپائی اور سننے والے ذرائع پر بھی میسر ہے۔

Urdu

## Document history

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