

Enteral Nutrition (Tube Feeding) in the Hospital

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Enteral Nutrition (Tube Feeding) in the Hospital

This pamphlet gives information about enteral nutrition (also called **tube feeding**) while you are in the hospital. For information about enteral nutrition at home, visit the links or scan the QR codes below, or ask a member of your health care team for the following pamphlets:

- *Home Tube Feeding*
 - › www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/1211

Scan the QR code on your device (open the camera on your device, point the camera at the code, and tap the banner or border that appears)



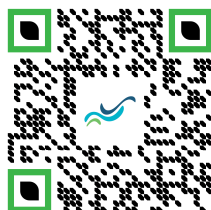
- *Tube Feeding General Information*
 - › www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/1189



- *PEG (Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastrostomy) Tube - VG Site*
 - › www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/1188



- *PEG (Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastrostomy) Button*
 - › www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/1186



What is enteral nutrition (E.N.)?

- E.N. is a special nutrition formula (liquid food).
- It is given through a tube to your stomach or small bowel. The tube is put in through your nose, or sometimes through your abdominal (stomach area) wall.
- Medications are often given through this tube as well.

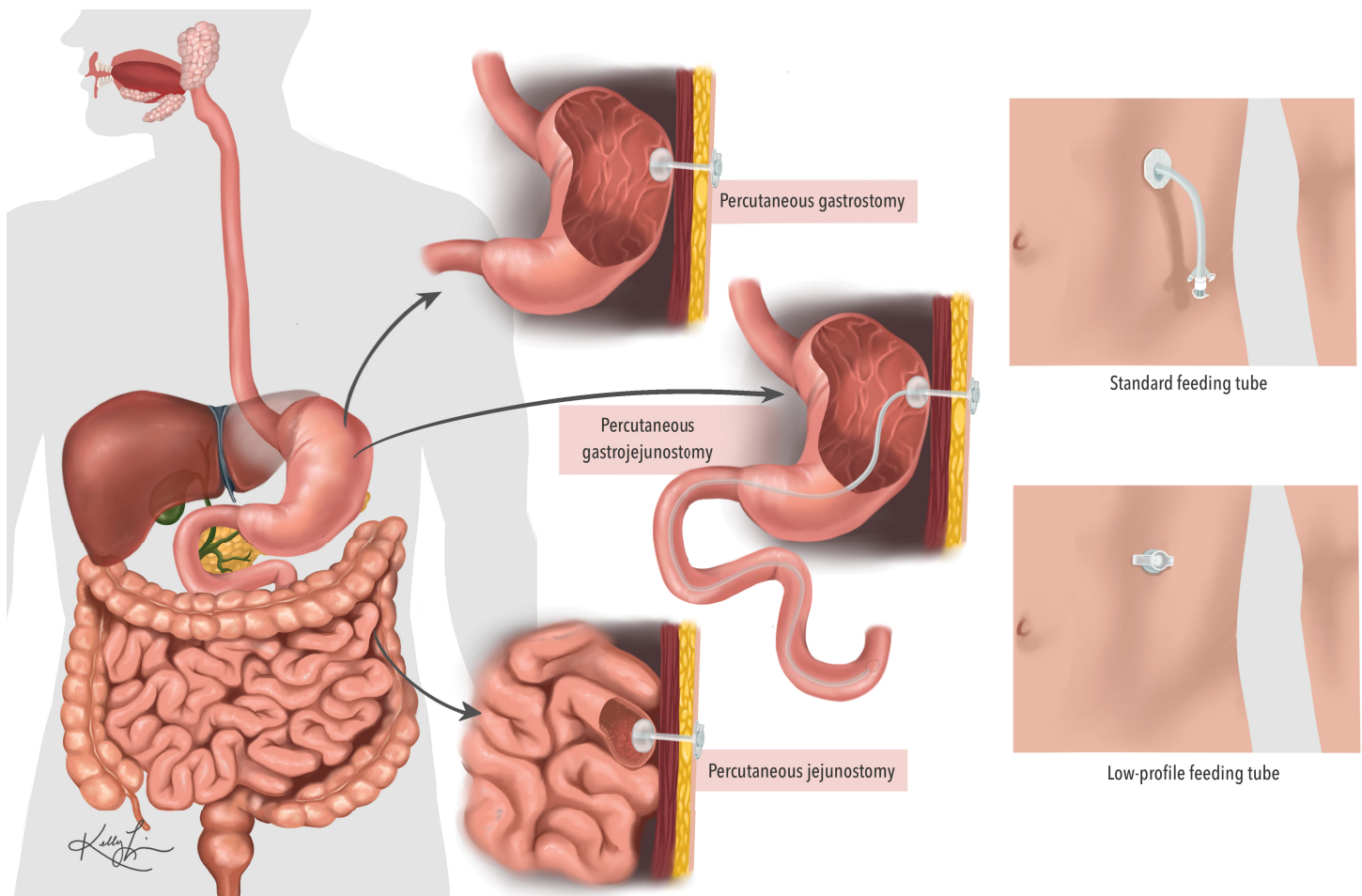
Why do I need E.N.?

- E.N. is used when you cannot get enough nutrition through food, but your digestive system still works.
- You may not be able to eat enough food because of:
 - › Swallowing problems (called **dysphagia**) that cause discomfort or make it unsafe for you to eat
 - › Not being alert enough during meals to eat enough or to eat safely
 - › A condition or a procedure that makes it hard to eat enough
 - › A blockage that does not let food pass through your esophagus or stomach
 - › Not being able to digest food in your stomach, so food must be given directly into your small bowel
 - › Trouble absorbing (taking in) nutrients from food
- E.N. can be used to meet all or some of your nutrition needs. It has:
 - › Energy (calories)
 - › Protein
 - › Carbohydrates (sugar, starch, fibre)
 - › Lipids (fats)
 - › Vitamins
 - › Minerals
 - › Water

How is E.N. given?

E.N. is given through a tube. The type of tube will depend on your needs.

- **Short-term E.N.** (4 to 6 weeks)
 - › A **nasogastric (NG) tube** goes through your nose into your stomach.
 - › A **nasoduodenal (ND) tube** goes through your nose into your small bowel, into the duodenum.
 - › A **nasojejunal (NJ) tube** goes through your nose into your small bowel, into the jejunum.
- **Long-term E.N.** (longer than 6 weeks) is given through a tube that goes through a small incision (cut) on the outside of your abdominal wall.
 - › A **gastrostomy (G-tube)** tube goes into your stomach.
 - › A **gastrojejunostomy (GJ tube)** or a **jejunostomy (J-tube)** goes into your small bowel.
- Ask a member of your health care team what kind of tube you have.



How is an E.N. tube inserted (put in)?

There are 4 ways to insert an E.N. tube. This will depend on the type of tube and your health care needs:

1. **Radiologically Inserted Gastrostomy (RIG) or Radiologically Inserted Gastrojejunostomy (RIG-J):** This is done by a radiologist using X-ray fluoroscopy (video) to guide the tube into place.
2. **Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastrostomy (PEG) or Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastrojejunostomy (PEG-J):** This is done using an endoscope (a flexible tube with a camera and a light on the end) to guide the tube into the stomach or small intestine.
3. **Surgery:** This is done in an operating room (O.R.). You may need surgery to insert:
 - › A gastrostomy tube, if it cannot be placed in one of the ways above
 - › A jejunostomy (J) tube
4. **Nasogastric (NG) or Orogastric (OG) tube insertion:** NG and OG tubes are commonly inserted by nursing staff at the bedside. They do this by passing an NG tube through the nose or an OG tube through the mouth into the stomach. They then do an X-ray to make sure the tube is in the correct place.

When is E.N. given?

- Your health care team will work with you to make a schedule that is right for you. Your E.N. may be given on:
 - › **A continuous schedule** over 24 hours a day
 - › **A cyclic schedule** for part of the day (like 8, 12, or 16 hours during the day, or overnight)
 - › **An intermittent schedule** over a few hours multiple times a day with breaks in between
 - › **A bolus schedule** over a short period of time at regular times (like when you would usually eat meals and snacks)

What is in an E.N. formula?

- An E.N. formula is made of ingredients that are blended into a liquid. It usually includes:
 - › Milk
 - › Starch
 - › Fibre
 - › Sugar
 - › Salt
 - › Preservatives
 - › Water
 - › Vitamins and minerals
- An E.N. formula gives your body:
 - › **Macronutrients:** nutrients your body needs in large amounts to stay healthy. There are 3 macronutrients:
 1. **Carbohydrates:** the body's main source of energy
 - › **Fibre:** a type of carbohydrate that the body cannot digest. It is important for keeping your bowels working well, supporting blood sugar and cholesterol levels, and helping you to feel full.
 2. **Proteins:** a source of energy that helps you gain and keep muscle, keep your immune system strong, and heal after an injury, an illness, or surgery
 3. **Fats:** a source of energy that helps you build and repair cells, absorb some vitamins, and make hormones
 - › **Micronutrients:** nutrients your body needs in small amounts to stay healthy. This includes vitamins and minerals.
 - › **Water:** important for your body to work well
- Your dietitian will give you an E.N. prescription based on your nutrient needs. This will depend on your:
 - › Age
 - › Weight
 - › Height
 - › Hydration (how much fluids you have in your body)
 - › Medical history and conditions
 - › Usual eating habits and what you have eaten recently
 - › Activity and lifestyle
 - › Treatment plan

If you have food and/or medication allergies:

- Many E.N. formulas are lactose-free.
- E.N. formulas are generally certified gluten-free.
- Tell your health care team if you have any food and/or medication allergies or intolerances.

If you follow a vegan or vegetarian eating plan:

- The most common E.N. formulas have dairy (milk) ingredients and may have other animal byproducts.
- Tell your health care team if you do not eat animal products.

If you follow a kosher and/or halal eating plan:

- Many E.N. formulas are certified kosher and halal.
- Tell your health care team if you follow a kosher and/or halal eating plan.

What are the benefits of E.N.?

- Your health care team will talk with you about why E.N. may be right for you.
Benefits include:
 - › Getting enough nutrition
 - › Preventing or treating malnutrition (poor nutrition)
 - › Supporting healing and recovery
 - › Lowering the risk of choking or aspiration (food going into your lungs) when eating, if you have swallowing problems

What are the possible risks of E.N.?

- Your health care team will talk with you about the possible risks and complications of E.N., and what they will do to lower your risk. Some complications include:
 - › Discomfort in your nose and throat because of nasal (nose) tubes
 - › Changes in your blood sugar levels
 - › Changes in the electrolyte levels in your blood
 - › The tube falling out or being pulled out
 - › Liquid formula going into your lungs and causing pneumonia (lung infection), especially if you are lying flat during or shortly after feeding. It can help to stay sitting up at an angle of more than 30 degrees during feeding and for 30 minutes after.
 - › Digestive upset, like nausea (upset stomach), vomiting (throwing up), and/or diarrhea (loose, watery poops). If this happens, your health care team will change your E. N. formula or add medications to help.
 - › Clogged tube
 - › Infection at the tube site (where the tube enters your body)
- **Tell your health care team right away if you have any of these symptoms.**

How long will I need E.N.?

- If your health care team recommends E.N. while you are in the hospital, they will talk with you about how long you may need it. This will depend on:
 - › If your swallowing problems get better
 - › If you can eat enough to keep up your nutrition, weight, and healing
 - › If your condition gets better and you are able to eat, digest, and absorb (take in) nutrition from food
 - › Your treatment plan
- Most people only need E.N. for a short time.
- You may be discharged from the hospital while receiving E.N. If you need E.N. at home, your health care team will teach you or your caregivers how to give it safely.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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