

## Tube Feeding Potential Problems/Complications

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Symptoms</b>	<b>Immediate Action</b>	<b>Possible Causes</b>	<b>Prevention</b>
<b>Aspiration</b>	Heartburn or vomiting Coughing, choking Difficulty breathing and/or shortness of breath with or without chest pain, loud, wet breath sounds Rapid heart rate Agitation	Stop the tube feeding Notify health care practitioner Notify designated agency personnel	Person improperly positioned for feeding Tube movement/out of place Swallowing disorder Poor gag reflex Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) Delayed stomach emptying	Do not administer feeding if stomach feels full, is distended or if person is vomiting Follow directions for tube feeding rate and feeding method (per health care practitioner) Examine feeding tube for placement prior to feeding, or at specified intervals and make sure tube is secured per instructions Position properly for feeding (per health care practitioner)
<b>Constipation</b>	Infrequent, hard stools Abdominal bloating, cramping/pain	Increase fluids Use stool softener or laxative as ordered by health care practitioner Notify designated agency personnel Call health care practitioner if: a)hard, infrequent stools are combined with leakage of liquid stool, b)there is no bowel movement in 2-3 days, c)vomiting, d)stomach bloating, e)cramping	Inadequate fluid intake and/or fiber intake Side effects from medication Inactivity Bowel obstruction Decreased bowel motility	Fiber and fluids as ordered by health care practitioner Medications (stool softener or laxative) as ordered by health care practitioner Maintain activity level as recommended by health care professional and as tolerated
<b>Diarrhea</b>	Abdominal pain & cramping Loose stools	Slow down tube feeding Follow written instructions from health care professional and notify health care professional if indicated Notify designated agency personnel	Intolerance to tube feeding formula Allergy to tube feeding formula Rate too high Contaminated formula Gastrointestinal disorder Adverse medication side effects (particularly antibiotics)	Follow directions for tube feeding rate and feeding method (per health care professional) Follow protocol for tube feeding hygiene Report any recent antibiotic use

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<b>Fluid or Electrolyte Imbalance</b>	Rapid weight loss or gain Edema (swelling) Thirst Shortness of breath Shakiness, tremors, muscle cramps, numbness, tingling sensations Heart palpitations Tiredness, weakness Loss of coordination	Stop tube feeding for shortness of breath Report all symptoms to health care professional Notify designated agency personnel	Increased or decreased urine output Inadequate fluid intake Excessive fluid loss from vomiting, diarrhea	Administer tube feedings and flushes as ordered Monitor intake and output Monitor weight
<b>GI Bleeding</b>	Bright red blood in or on stool Black, tarry stool Vomit that looks like coffee grounds Blood from and/or around the tube	Notify health care professional Notify designated agency personnel	Bleeding in GI tract between mouth and anus Irritation from feeding tube	Good management/treatment of vomiting, diarrhea and/or constipation Make sure tube is secured per instructions
<b>Hyperglycemia (high blood sugar)</b>	Nausea Weakness Headache Anxiety Blurred vision Excessive hunger, thirst, urination	Follow protocol (parameters) previously determined by health care professional Call health care professional if blood sugar results are above parameters Notify designated agency personnel	Uncontrolled diabetes Excessive stress from illness Certain medications	Have parameters from health care professional in place Monitor blood sugars as ordered
<b>Hypoglycemia (low blood sugar)</b>	Shaking Nausea Pale facial color Weakness, tiredness Palpitations Sweating Anxiety Dizziness Blurred vision Headache Blood sugar below 60	Follow protocol (parameters) previously determined by health care professional Call health care professional if blood sugar results are below parameters Notify designated agency personnel	Diabetes Certain medications Tube feedings not administered as ordered	Administer tube feedings as ordered Have parameters from health care professional in place Monitor blood sugars as ordered

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<b>Nausea/Vomiting</b>	Nausea and/or vomiting Dry heaves/retching Abdominal distension, bloating, cramping Cold sweat	Stop tube feeding Follow written instructions from health care professional and notify health care professional if indicated Notify designated agency personnel	Recently began tube feedings (not accustomed to it yet) Intolerance to tube feeding formula Allergy to tube feeding formula Rate too high Contaminated formula Tube displaced Person improperly positioned for feeding Gastrointestinal issues Constipation Bowel obstruction Noxious odors Medication intolerance Upper respiratory illness (coughing, post nasal drip)	Follow directions for tube feeding rate and feeding method (per health care professional) Follow protocol for tube feeding hygiene Examine feeding tube for placement prior to feeding, or at specified intervals Position properly for feeding and after feeding (per health care professional) Check stomach residuals (G-tube) prior to feeding (per health care professional)
<b>Skin Site Irritation/Tube Leaking</b>	Skin irritation in area around tube Pain in area Foul odor Leakage from feeding tube or around feeding tube	Stop tube feeding Clean skin Clamp feeding tube above area of injury Follow written instructions from health care professional and notify health care professional if indicated Notify designated agency personnel	Improperly fitting tube Excessive tugging at tube Accidental injury to tube Defective tube	Provide care to the insertion site as instructed Secure tube as instructed Avoid excessive rough handling of tube Avoid using sharp objects around tube
<b>Tube Displacement</b>	Tube outside of body or not in proper position Choking and/or difficulty breathing Nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain	Stop tube feeding Notify health care professional Notify designated agency personnel	Tube not properly secured Accidental or excessive pulling of tube Balloon (which holds tube in place) deflated Excessive vomiting	Check placement of feeding tube at designated intervals

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<b>Tube Obstruction/ Blockage</b> <i>(clogged tube)</i>	Inability to flush tubing Bulging of tube during flush or feeding	Check that clamp on tubing is open, if yes see below Stop tube feeding Follow written instructions for flushing from health care professional Notify health care professional if flush unsuccessful Notify designated agency personnel	Tubing clamp closed Poor medication administration technique (meds not completely crushed or dissolved) Inadequate flushing of tube Defective tubing	Open clamp during flushing, feeding, and medication administration Administer medications per instructions Flush per instructions