

The Basics of Feeding Tubes: A Comprehensive Guide for Patients and Loved Ones

Feeding tubes are medical devices that are used to provide nutrition and hydration to people who are unable to eat or drink enough by mouth. They can be used for short-term or long-term use, and they can be placed in different parts of the digestive system.



The Basics of Feeding Tubes: Information for Parents and Caregivers by Joy Vines

★★★★☆ 4.2 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 2318 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Lending : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Print length : 34 pages



Types of Feeding Tubes

There are two main types of feeding tubes: nasogastric (NG) tubes and gastrostomy (G) tubes.

- **Nasogastric (NG) tubes** are thin, flexible tubes that are inserted through the nose and down into the stomach. They are typically used

for short-term feeding, such as when a person is recovering from surgery or an illness.

- **Gastrostomy (G) tubes** are surgically placed tubes that are inserted directly into the stomach. They are typically used for long-term feeding, such as when a person has a chronic illness or disability that prevents them from eating or drinking enough by mouth.

Placement of Feeding Tubes

Feeding tubes are typically placed by a doctor or nurse. The procedure is usually done in a hospital or outpatient surgery center.

NG tubes are inserted through the nose and down into the stomach. The tube is then secured in place with tape or a collar. G tubes are surgically placed through a small incision in the abdomen. The tube is then secured in place with sutures.

Care of Feeding Tubes

Feeding tubes require regular care to prevent infection and other complications. The tube should be cleaned daily with soap and water. The skin around the tube should also be kept clean and dry.

The tube should be flushed with water before and after each feeding. The tube should also be flushed if it becomes clogged.

If the tube becomes dislodged, it is important to seek medical attention immediately.

Nutritional Management

People who receive nutrition through a feeding tube need to have a balanced diet that meets their individual nutritional needs. The diet should be planned by a registered dietitian.

The diet can be delivered through the feeding tube in a variety of ways, including:

- **Bolus feeding** is when the entire feeding is delivered at once.
- **Continuous feeding** is when the feeding is delivered over a period of time.
- **Cyclic feeding** is when the feeding is delivered in cycles, such as every 4 hours.

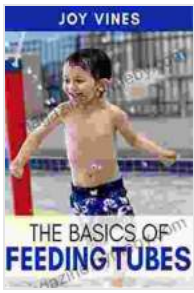
The type of feeding method that is used will depend on the person's individual needs.

Feeding tubes can be a life-saving intervention for people who are unable to eat or drink enough by mouth. They can provide safe and effective nutrition and hydration, and they can help people to maintain their health and quality of life.

If you are considering using a feeding tube, it is important to talk to your doctor or nurse to discuss the benefits and risks.

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