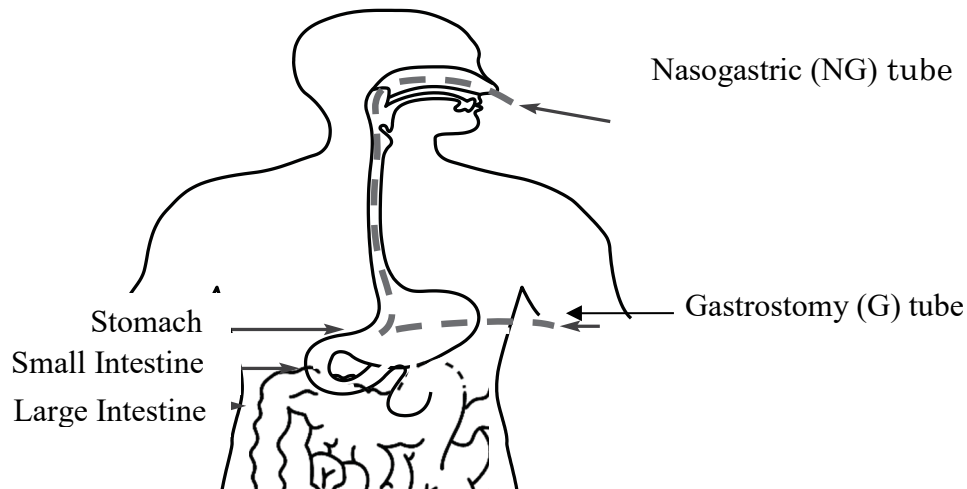


### What is a tube feeding?

Tube feeding is a method by which a person is fed liquid nutrition through a tube that is placed into the stomach or small bowel. The diagram below shows different types of tubes for feeding:



### Why would I need a tube for feeding?

If you are not able to eat or drink enough and are losing weight, you may need a tube for feeding to help you meet your nutrition needs. There are different reasons why it may be difficult for you to eat or drink enough:

- A blockage in the throat or stomach due to cancer
- Possible severe side effects of cancer treatment such as a sore mouth or throat
- Damage to the muscles and nerves which prevents you from swallowing properly and safely

### What are the benefits of tube feeding?

- Help you to meet your calorie and protein needs to maintain weight
- Help maintain your energy and strength
- Improve your sense of well-being and quality of life
- Provide another way to take your medicines and fluids
- Less frustration and discomfort when trying to eat

## **What are the risks and challenges of tube feeding?**

- Initial discomfort when the tube is placed
- Irritation or infection at the tube site
- Tube may move out of place and need to be put back in
- Regular blood tests

## **Who decides if I need a tube for feeding?**

Your healthcare team may recommend a tube for feeding.

This will be discussed in detail with you and/or family members or caregivers. After this discussion, you can decide whether or not to have a feeding tube placed.

If you choose to have a tube placed, your healthcare team will work with you to decide the goals of care.

These goals of care will be reviewed regularly with you to decide if:

- Your goals are being met
- The tube feedings are still in your best interest
- You still want to continue with the tube feedings

## **How are the tube feedings given?**

The tube feedings are usually divided into 3-4 small feedings throughout the day. The tube is flushed with a small amount of water before and after each feed. Each feeding will take about 1- 2 hours depending on the amount of formula and water you need.

## **Will I be able to eat or drink while I have tube feedings?**

Your healthcare team will assess if it is safe for you to eat or drink. If it is safe and comfortable for you to swallow, you can continue to eat and drink small amounts as tolerated during or between the tube feedings. Your tube feeding schedule will be based on your ability to eat or drink, your daily routine and your goals of care.

## **What if I decide not to have a tube for feeding?**

As this can be a hard decision to make, your healthcare team is available to help and answer all your questions. If you decide not to have a tube placed for feeding, your healthcare team will still continue to actively work with you to meet your goals of care.

Visit our website: [www.bccancer.bc.ca](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca)

### Acknowledgments:

This information has been adapted with permission from the *Making Decisions about Tube Feeding: Patient & Family Information*. - Vancouver Coastal Health