

Factsheet 3: Giving an anti-cancer medicine through a feeding tube

This factsheet will guide you through how to give anti-cancer tablets/capsules/liquids/prepared syringes safely through a feeding tube.

You should only give an anti-cancer medicine through a feeding tube if you have been taught how to do this safely by a healthcare professional. It is safe for you to handle these medicines if you are taking them as part of your treatment, however they may cause side effects (including skin irritation) if handled by others.

This procedure is not suitable for all medicines. Please only use this procedure for the anti-cancer tablets/capsules/liquids that pharmacy staff have advised you about.

Remember

- Your anti-cancer medicines should not be handled by anyone who is pregnant or planning a pregnancy unless you are taking the advice of your medical team.
- Use the oral anti-cancer pack provided.
- Store the anti-cancer medicines in the container provided.
- Store the anti-cancer medicines in a secure place, away from and out of the sight of children.

Preparation

You will need a clean and clear working surface.

Try to ensure there are no interruptions (for example from pets or children).

Do not mix different medicines together.

If there are problems fitting the anti-cancer medicine in around feeds, please talk to the dietitian.

Feeding tube procedure

1. You will need to have ready the following items:
 - the anti-cancer tablets/capsules/liquids/prepared syringes needed for the dose
 - tap water (unless otherwise specified)
(Suitable liquid: _____)
 - three 50ml oral/enteral syringes
 - one syringe cap
 - yellow special clinical waste bag
 - kitchen roll (kept only for this purpose)
 - pair of non-sterile disposable gloves
 - mask
 - plastic apron
2. Place a sheet of kitchen towel on the working surface.

3. Fill two syringes with 30-50mls of water for flushing the tube.
4. Put on the gloves, mask and apron.
5. Prepare the dose according to the type of medicine you have i.e. tablet/capsule/liquid/prepared syringe. See details of how to do this below.
6. If a feed is running, stop the feed and flush the feeding tube with 30-50mls of water using one of the 50ml oral/enteral syringes.
7. Give the prepared medicine through the feeding tube. Draw up about 10ml of water into the medicine syringe to rinse and give through the feeding tube. This will ensure that the whole dose has been given.
8. If more than one type of medicine is needed to be given at the same time, flush the feeding tube with 30-50ml of water between each medicine to prevent the different medicines mixing in the feeding tube.
9. Once all medicine doses have been given, flush the feeding tube with the second 50ml oral/enteral syringe containing 30-50mls of water.
10. Re-start the feed.
11. The syringes can be washed in warm soapy water, rinsed and dried before being re-used. Replace syringes after using 30 times or sooner if necessary.
12. In case of any spillages, please see Table 1 below for details
13. Clean the work surface with damp kitchen roll and dispose of kitchen roll, mask, apron and gloves into the yellow clinical waste bag provided.
14. Seal and return the waste bag to the hospital when full.
15. Wash hands thoroughly.

How to prepare TABLETS to give through a feeding tube

1. Place a sheet of kitchen towel on the working surface.
2. Put on the gloves and apron.
3. Remove the plunger from one of the oral/enteral syringes and put the tablet(s) for the dose inside the barrel. Carefully replace the plunger to within about 1cm of the tablet(s).
4. Draw up about 10ml of water in to the syringe. More water may be needed for some tablets. Leave some air in the syringe to help agitate the tablet(s).
5. Put a syringe cap on the syringe and allow the tablet(s) to disperse.
6. Agitate the syringe every 5 minutes or so to help the tablet(s) disperse.
 - **Note** different tablets take different amounts of time to disperse and may not dissolve completely. For example, there may be small lumps or grains in the solution.
7. When the tablet(s) has dispersed, the dose is ready to administer. Refer back to point 6 of the feeding tube procedure and continue as directed.

How to prepare CAPSULES to give through a feeding tube

8. You will need two medicine pots and a spoon (used only for this purpose) in addition to the list stated in point one of the procedure.
9. Place a sheet of kitchen towel on the working surface.
10. Put on the gloves, mask and apron.
11. Put the capsule(s) needed for the dose in one medicine pot.
12. Hold a capsule firmly at each end.
13. With the second medicine pot underneath carefully twist and pull the capsule open. Empty the contents into the medicine pot. Place the empty capsule in the yellow clinical waste bag.
14. Repeat steps 5 and 6 for each capsule needed for the dose.
15. Add about 15-30ml of water to the capsule contents in the medicine pot and mix.
16. Once the capsule contents have been dispersed in the water, draw up the mixture into the oral/enteral syringe and give through the feeding tube.
17. Rinse the medicine pot with water, draw up into the oral/enteral syringe and give this through the feeding tube also to ensure that the whole dose is given.
18. Refer back to point 6 of the feeding tube procedure and continue as directed.
19. The medicine pots and spoons can be washed in warm soapy water, rinsed and dried before being re-used for this purpose.

How to prepare LIQUIDS to give through a feeding tube

20. Place a sheet of kitchen towel on the working surface.
21. Put on the gloves and apron.
22. Shake the liquid well to ensure that the medicine is evenly distributed.
23. Use an oral syringe to draw out the dose from the medicine bottle.
24. The medicine can then be transferred to one of the 50ml oral/enteral syringes and given through the feeding tube unless you are told to dilute it first.
25. If the liquid is very thick or contains sugars, it may need to be diluted before giving through the feeding tube. In these cases:
 - a. Use an oral syringe to draw up the dose and put it in a medicine pot.
 - b. Add water to the medicine pot and stir until well mixed.
 - c. Draw up the mixture into an oral/enteral syringe and give through the feeding tube.
 - d. Rinse the medicine pot with water and give this through the feeding tube also to ensure that the whole dose is given.
26. Refer back to point 6 of the feeding tube procedure and continue as directed.

How to prepare ANTI-CANCER SYRINGES to give through a feeding tube

Depending on the type of feeding tube being used, the anti-cancer syringes provided may or may not attach directly to the feeding tube. The syringes will attach directly to most gastrostomy (PEG) tubes. Adaptors may be available for other types of tube – please ask the dietitian.

27. You will need a tray and a pair of scissors (used only for this purpose) in addition to the list stated in point one of the procedure.
28. Place a sheet of kitchen towel on the working surface.
29. Put on the gloves and apron.
30. Collect the anti-cancer syringe(s) needed for the dose.
31. Cut open one end of the plastic wrapper and place the syringe(s) on the tray.
32. Follow point 6 of the feeding tube procedure.
33. To give the anti-cancer syringe, holding the first anti-cancer syringe over the tray, carefully remove the cap from the syringe by twisting it anti-clockwise. Put the cap in the clinical waste bag.
34. Attach the anti-cancer syringe to the feeding tube and gently push in.
35. Disconnect the syringe and place it directly in the clinical waste bag.
36. If more than one anti-cancer syringe is needed, flush the feeding tube with about 10ml of water between each syringe.
37. Once all anti-cancer syringes have been given, refer back to point 8 of the feeding tube procedure and continue as directed with the exception of point 11.

Table 1: Handling spillages

Contact	Action
Skin	Immediately wash the affected area thoroughly with luke warm soapy water. Do not scrub as this may damage the skin. Contact your doctor for advice if you have any adverse effects.
Eye	Wash the eye with plenty of fresh water every few minutes for about 20 minutes. Contact your doctor for advice if you have any adverse effects.
Work surface or floor	Wearing protective clothing (gloves and apron) wipe up the spillage using paper towels. Wash the area with warm soapy water and dry with absorbent paper towel. Kitchen towel should be put in the special clinical waste bag.
Clothing	Wearing gloves, blot the area with kitchen towel, remove clothing and wash separately from other items. Wash any affected areas of your skin as described above. Kitchen towel should be put in the special clinical waste bag.