

How to Unclog Your Feeding Tube

What causes a clogged feeding tube?

First check to make sure the tube is **not** clamped or kinked anywhere.

Feeding tubes can get clogged with dried formula or medicine that sticks to the side of the tubing.

What should I use to unclog the tube?

You may be able to clear the tube yourself, using **warm water** and a **60-milliliter syringe**.

Tip: Water is the best choice to unclog your tube. Research shows that other fluids, such as fizzy drinks and juice **don't** work and may even make the clog worse.

To unclog your feeding tube, you'll need:

- A 60-milliliter catheter tip or oral syringe
- One (1) cup of warm water
- A towel or washcloth

Tip: Always wash your hands before handling the feeding tube and supplies.

What are the steps to unclog the tube?

1. Attach a 60 mL syringe to your tube and pull back on the plunger to remove as much fluid as you can.
2. Draw up at least 15 mL of warm water into the syringe, or enough to fill the part of your tube that you can see.
3. Push the water into your tube with a 60 mL syringe.



4. Gently push and pull the plunger to loosen the clog.



5. If the clog doesn't release right away, clamp your tube and let the water "soak" for 15 minutes.



6. Try gently massaging the tubing with your fingertips.



7. Unclamp the tube and repeat steps 1 through 5.

If you can't clear the clog, or if you still can't use your feeding tube, contact your doctor or nurse.

How can I prevent a clogged feeding tube?

- Have the tube exchanged every 3 months.
- Flush the tube with warm water often to keep it from getting plugged.
 - **Adult patients:** If you haven't started to use your tube for feedings, flush it at least twice a day with 60 ml of water.
 - **Pediatric (child) patients:** Ask your health care team how often to flush the tube. Flush the tube before and after feedings and medicines.
- Always flush the tube before and after you use it to take formula or medicine.
- When you're not using the tube, flush it every few hours and keep it closed.
- It's more common for medicine to clog the tube, so be sure to dissolve medicines completely and flush your tube afterward.

For directions on how to give crushed medicine, please see "Taking medicines" in the handout, ["Caring for Your Tube at Home."](#)

For questions or problems, please call
Fairview Home Infusion
612-672-2233.