

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Caring for Your Drainage Gastrostomy Tube

This information will help you care for your drainage gastrostomy tube (g-tube).

## About your drainage G-tube

A drainage g-tube is a tube that is put into your stomach to drain stomach juices and fluids (see Figure 1). It helps to relieve nausea (feeling like you're going to throw up). It also helps to relieve vomiting (throwing up) caused by a blockage in your bowel (intestines). This will make you feel more comfortable.

There are different types of g-tubes. Depending on which type you have, there will be different connections. Your nurse will teach you about the type of g-tube you have. Your nurse will also give you these supplies to take home:

- 1 box of 4 x 4 gauze.
- 1 roll of 1-inch tape.
- 1 60 milliliter (mL) irrigation syringe.
- 2 drainage bags.
- 2 caps to fit your g-tube.
- 1 Cath-Secure®.
- Polyderm™ dressing.

Your healthcare provider may also prescribe pain medication to relieve discomfort you may have around your drainage g-tube.

## Caring for your skin around your drainage G-tube

### Check your skin

Look closely at the skin around your g-tube everyday. If you see any redness, swelling, or pus (thick, yellow or white drainage), tell your healthcare provider.

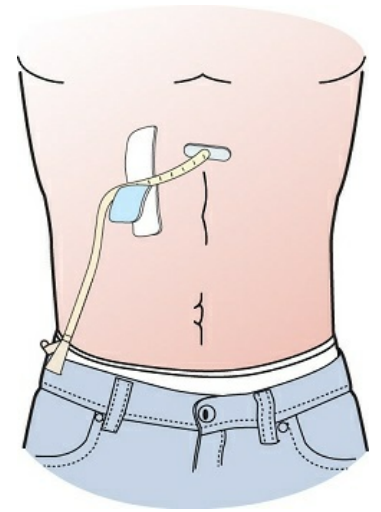


Figure 1. A drainage gastrostomy tube

## Clean your skin

Clean your skin everyday following the instructions below:

1. Remove the old bandage around your g-tube. It's normal to see fluid or mucus stains on the bandage. It's also normal to see old blood or crusting around the g-tube.
2. Wash the skin around your g-tube with soap and water, removing any fluids or crusting. Gently pat it dry.
3. Cover your insertion site with a 4 x 4 gauze pad or Polyderm border foam dressing.
4. Loop the tube and secure it with tape or a Cath-Secure.



If your g-tube falls out, cover the opening with several 4 x 4 gauzes. Call your healthcare provider right away. Do not eat or drink anything.

## Caring for your drainage bag

### Emptying your drainage bag

Empty the drainage bag when it is about  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  full or about every 8 hours, whichever comes first.

### Cleaning and changing your drainage bag

Clean your drainage bag once a day if you're eating soft foods. If you're not eating, clean the bag every 3 to 4 days.

To clean your bag:

1. Mix 1 part white vinegar with 3 parts cool water.
2. Soak your bag in this solution for 10 to 15 minutes.
3. Allow the bag to dry.

You may feel nauseous or have some discomfort when your g-tube is capped (not open to drainage) while you clean and dry the bag. If so, attach another bag.

Change your bag once a week.

Place your drainage bag lower than your stomach to help fluids drain faster.

## Flushing your drainage G-tube

Your healthcare provider may tell you to flush your g-tube. If so, follow the instructions below:

- Flush your g-tube at least once a day. You may need to flush it more often if:
  - Thick stomach juices or mucus clog it
  - You feel nauseous
  - You feel full and don't feel better after sitting up.
- To flush your g-tube, follow these instructions:
  - Gather the supplies you need:
    - 30 to 60 mL of water (or the amount told by your healthcare provider).
    - 1 60 mL syringe.
    - 1 plastic cap for the tube.
    - 1 clean drainage bag.
    - Paper towels.
  - Empty the drainage bag.
  - Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
  - Place the paper towels under your g-tube to absorb any drainage.
  - Draw up 30 to 60 mL of water into the syringe, as told by your healthcare provider.
  - Clamp your g-tube.
  - Disconnect your g-tube from the drainage bag and set the drainage bag to the side.
  - Insert the syringe into the opening of your g-tube.
  - Unclamp the g-tube and push the plunger of the syringe briskly.
  - Clamp your g-tube.
  - Remove the syringe and reconnect your g-tube to the drainage bag.
  - Unclamp your g-tube and allow it to drain.
- If your g-tube isn't draining anything, or if you were nauseous and it didn't get better after flushing it, call your healthcare provider.

## **Eating and drinking with your drainage G-tube**

- Your healthcare provider will tell you when you can start drinking clear liquids after your procedure. Clear liquids include drinks such as ginger ale, apple juice, coffee,

tea, broth, flavored ice, and gelatin (such as Jell-O®).

- Sit up when you drink or eat to allow the foods or liquids to drain into the drainage bag. Remain sitting up for 20 to 30 minutes after you eat. If you don't, you may feel nauseous. If you feel nauseous, check to make sure your g-tube is not kinked. This should make you feel better.
- Once you're able to drink clear liquids without any problems, slowly increase your diet to include any liquids. If you haven't had any problems after 2 days, you can start eating soft or puréed foods. Purée your foods in a blender or food processor.
- If you eat food that isn't puréed, you must eat it in tiny pieces and chew it very well. Eat very small portions at a time. Don't eat more than 4 cups of food or drink more than 1 liter (33.8 ounces) of liquids in 24 hours. Each time you eat or drink, you will lose important nutrients. This is because they drain into the drainage bag with the food or liquid. A member of your healthcare team will teach you how to get the nutrition you need.

Most of what you eat and drink will drain through the tube into the drainage bag. For example, if you eat red gelatin, the drainage in the bag will be red. Stomach juices will drain into the bag even if you haven't eaten. The color of your stomach juices will range from green to dark yellow.

Most people will need to have intravenous (IV) fluids while they're at home so they don't become dehydrated. You may have an implanted port (such as a Mediport®) or other IV access such as a central venous catheter (CVC) put in to give you these fluids. If you need IV access, your healthcare provider will talk with you about having one placed while you're in the hospital.

## **Clamping your drainage G-tube**

Always keep your drainage g-tube open at night to prevent aspiration. Aspiration is when food, liquids, or saliva get into your airway.

Do not clamp your drainage g-tube for the first week that you have it except for when you're taking your medication.

## **Taking medication with your drainage G-tube**

You can swallow medication tablets, but you will need to clamp your tube first. You will also need to leave your tube clamped for 15 to 30 minutes after you take your medication..

## When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if:

- You have a fever of 101 °F (38.3 °C) or higher.
- You have shakes or chills.
- Your g-tube becomes dislodged or falls out.
- You have any signs of bleeding.
- You have pain where your g-tube goes into your stomach that doesn't better with medication.
- You have nausea and vomiting that is worse than usual.
- You have any signs of redness, swelling, oozing, or pus on your skin around the tube.
- You need to change your bandages more than 3 times a day or your g-tube keeps leaking.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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