

# Frequently asked questions about enteral nutrition

## Questions about enteral nutrition

### When should I call a doctor?

Contact your doctor if:

- The tube becomes dislodged or really uncomfortable
- You experience diarrhea or constipation that lasts longer than three days
- You experience vomiting or consistent nausea
- You notice significant weight loss or gain that was unplanned
- You notice blood, redness and swelling, or foul-smelling drainage around the tube site
- You notice large amounts of fluid leaking around the tube (dressing is soaked more than once/day)
- You notice persistent choking, coughing or difficulty breathing

### How do I keep the feeding port site clean?

If you notice any leakage or crusting at the site of the feeding tube, gently wipe it clean with a soft cloth. Wash the site with warm soapy water daily and rinse well. You can use gauze around the tube to keep the tube site clean and dry. Watch for any signs of redness, swelling, pain or infection. If you notice any of these symptoms, contact your doctor.

### What do I do if I experience diarrhea, constipation or an upset stomach?

You can prevent many of these issues by staying hydrated, keeping your equipment clean and adjusting gradually to therapy. If any of these issues persist, contact your doctor or home care dietitian at **317.963.9732**.

### How do I stay hydrated?

Be sure to flush your tube with water via a syringe regularly. If you are unable to take water by mouth, your tube can be used to provide additional hydration. Your tube feeding formula has some water in it, but you will need additional water daily to meet your hydration needs. If you think you are not getting enough water, please contact your doctor or home care dietitian at **317.963.9732**.

### What safety practices do I need to follow?

Be sure to wash your hands before handling your feeding tube or supplies. Use formula by expiration date and store appropriately. Never use a formula that was not prescribed by your doctor or dietitian.

## Questions about formula

### How should I store my formula?

**Liquid formula:** Store unopened containers in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight or air vents. Store opened containers in the refrigerator while not in use and use within 24 hours.

**Powdered formula:** Store unopened containers in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight and air vents. Once mixed, formula should be kept in the refrigerator and used within 24 hours. Unmixed powder should be covered and used before expiration date.

### What do I do if my formula is clumpy?

Clumpy formula can cause issues with clogging or tolerance. Be sure to mix well before use. Watch for foul odor or abnormal consistency and contact home care for assistance if needed.

## Questions about feeding tubes

### What do I do if my feeding tube becomes clogged?

If this happens, contact your provider or dietitian. You can prevent a clogged feeding tube by flushing it with a syringe before and after each use with clean, lukewarm water. If this happens, contact your doctor or home care dietitian at **317.963.9732**.

### What is the best position for tube feeding?

When administering a tube feeding, it is best to be upright or elevated to at least a 45 degree angle. Remain upright or elevated for at least 10 – 20 minutes following a feeding.

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Learn more at [iuhealth.org/EnteralNutrition](http://iuhealth.org/EnteralNutrition).

## Questions about equipment

### What do I do if my feeding pump has an error or alarm?

Please use the appropriate troubleshooting guides for assistance at [iuhealth.org/EnteralNutrition](https://www.iuhealth.org/EnteralNutrition). Other common solutions include restarting your feeding pump and trying a new feeding bag. If you are unable to solve the issue after using this guide, please contact your home care dietitian at **317.963.9732**.

### How do I clean my syringes and extension sets?

Syringes and extension sets should be washed after each use. Wash with a non-degreasing dish soap, such as Ivory or Palmolive.

### How do I clean my feeding bags?

Feeding bags should ideally be used for 24 hours (you don't need to change bags more frequently). If you are on a continuous feed, you may need to refill your bag with formula during this time. However, if you are on your last feeding bag, do not throw it away until your new shipment has arrived. Bags can be rinsed using warm water between feedings. Feeding bags can be reused for up to 48 hours if necessary.

### How do I clean my feeding pump?

Keep your feeding pump clean from formula, water and debris. The pump can be cleaned with a wet washcloth. Be sure to dry the pump well before use. Do NOT submerge the feeding pump in water.

## Questions about refills or shipments

### What do I do if my shipment arrives damaged, incorrect or is missing items?

We understand mistakes will occasionally occur. Please call us as soon as possible at **317.963.2400** so we can resolve your issues.

### How do I reorder my monthly supplies and/or formula?

You can place a product refill by calling us at **317.963.2400** or through our online refill form at [iuhealth.org/EnteralNutrition](https://www.iuhealth.org/EnteralNutrition). For your wellbeing and insurance purposes, we will need to speak with you every month when placing your refill order.

### How do I track my order by UPS?

When your nutrition refill is delivered by UPS, you can track your delivery through your UPS MyChoice account. You can set up a UPS MyChoice account at [ups.com](https://www.ups.com).

To reach a dietitian, call **317.963.9732**.

To place a refill, call **317.963.2400**.

To view educational materials, visit [iuhealth.org/EnteralNutrition](https://www.iuhealth.org/EnteralNutrition).



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