Nasogastric Tubes and Bridles

Information for patients

This leaflet can be made available in other formats including large print, CD and Braille and in languages other than English, upon request.
What is a Nasogastric Tube?

A Nasogastric tube (often called an NG Tube) is a thin plastic tube that is inserted into one of your nostrils, down the back of your throat then down to your stomach.

It is a feeding tube that medical practitioners (such as your Doctor or Nurse) use to provide adequate nutrition and hydration to a patient.

This can also be used to give medicines for patients who are having trouble taking them orally.

How is the NG Tube inserted?

Your doctor or nurse will discuss with you why they feel you need a tube for feeding. This will be discussed with your relatives if you are having difficulty deciding for yourself. Doctors will also explain the risks involved, such as aspiration (food entering your lungs).

Your Nurse/Doctor will measure the length they need to pass the tube down to your stomach. It is recommended for you to be in an upright position for this procedure. Then they will insert the tube into one of your nostrils.

Once the tube is inserted down to the back of your throat, the medical staff will ask you to swallow to help the tube to pass through the food pipe.

Once the tube has passed its required length it will be secured by an adhesive tape to the nose.
Overall, the procedure is usually not painful, but it can be uncomfortable for a short while.

**Why do I need a nasogastric tube?**

A feeding tube may be needed if you are unable to take nutrition orally or need supplemental nutritional intake. Tube feeding may be used short term for conditions such as:

- Impaired swallowing due to stroke, motor neurone disease, Parkinson’s disease or head injury
- Partial throat obstruction due to head or neck cancer
- Altered level of consciousness, making oral feeding impossible
- Ventilated patients with tracheostomy.

Examples of when oral intake may be inadequate and you require supplemental nasogastric feeding include:

- Cystic Fibrosis
- Burn and facial injury
- COPD
- Anorexia
What is a Bridle?

A Bridle is an NG tube retaining system, used to prevent accidental removal of nasogastric feeding tubes in patients still requiring tube feeding.

Not all patients who require tube feeding will require a bridle. This is considered only if a patient frequently pulls their nasogastric tube out. The use of a bridle is a consultant’s decision. They usually decide this after a full discussion with a team of different specialists, including the speech and language therapists and dietitians.

Will the tube and bridle get dirty and damage the skin around the nose?

All items will be cleaned and dried at least daily and more frequently if there are excessive secretions from the nose.

How safe it is to use nasogastric feeding tubes?

The position of the NG tube is checked every day before each feeding, including the length of the tube at the tip of the nose.

Aspirate (contents of the tummy) pH is also checked before starting the feed. If the aspirate is very acidic (pH lower than 5.5), it is likely to have come from your stomach, meaning the NG tube is correctly positioned.

If an aspirate is not obtained, an X-ray can be requested by the medical staff to make sure the NG tube is positioned correctly.
How will my swallowing reflex improve?

Speech and Language Therapists do swallowing exercises which may help you to get back to normal.

When will the tube be removed?

Nasogastric tubes and bridles are usually removed once you safely regain your ability to eat and drink orally. This is normally determined by Speech and Language Therapists who assess how well you swallow.
References


This leaflet has been produced in partnership with patients and carers. All patient leaflets are regularly reviewed, and any suggestions you have as to how it may be improved are extremely valuable. Please write to the Clinical Governance Team, North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust, University Hospital of North Tees or Email: nth-tr.leaflets@nhs.net

Comments, Concerns, Compliments or Complaints

We are continually trying to improve the services we provide.

We want to know what we’re doing well or if there’s anything which we can improve, that’s why the Patient Experience Team is here to help.

Our Patient Experience Team is here to try to resolve your concerns as quickly as possible. If you would like to contact or request a copy of our PET leaflet, please contact:

- Telephone: 01642 624719
- Monday – Friday, 9.30am – 4.00pm
- Messages can be left on the answering machine and will be picked up throughout the day.

- Freephone: 0800 092 0084

- Email: nth-tr.PatientExperience@nhs.net

Out of hours if you wish to speak to a senior member of Trust staff, please contact the hospital switchboard who will bleep the appropriate person.

- Telephone: 01642 617617
- 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

The Patient Experience Team is available to discuss your concerns in person Monday – Friday, 9.30am – 4.00pm. The office is based on the ground floor at the University Hospital of North Tees.

Data Protection and use of patient information

The Trust has developed a Data Protection, Caldicott and Disclosure Policy (IG5) in accordance with the Data Protection Legislation (General Data Protection Regulations and Data Protection Act 2018) and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. All of our staff respect this policy and confidentiality is adhered to at all times. If you require further information please contact the Information Governance Team.

- Telephone: 01642 383551 or Email: nth-tr.infogov@nhs.net

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