



WHAT IS AN ESOPHAGOSTOMY TUBE?

An esophagostomy tube (E-tube) is a feeding tube that enters the esophagus from a surgical incision on the left side of the neck. The tube does not enter the stomach; rather, it begins and ends in the esophagus. Food must enter the tube slowly so that it can be passed into the stomach slowly. A feeding tube allows your pet to be fed until its appetite or ability to eat has returned, and it also makes giving oral medications much simpler. Although these tubes can be lifesaving, feeding via tube and care of the tube require a dedicated pet owner.

Having the tube in place will not prevent your pet from eating and drinking on its own if it wishes to do so or if indicated by your veterinarian. In fact, eating by mouth is usually encouraged (with a few exceptions)! Once your pet can get all necessary food and medicine by mouth, the tube can be removed. For long-term conditions, these tubes can stay in your pet safely for several months.

WHY DOES AN ANIMAL NEED AN E-TUBE?

There are a variety of reasons a pet may need an E-tube, but usually it is because the pet cannot or will not take in enough calories to meet nutrition or water requirements. The tube also offers an easy way to administer many medications. Your pet can go home with an E-tube in place and does not need to stay in the hospital. You can feed a variety of diets by way of the tube, but they must be in the form of a slurry. This requires a diet that is very energy dense, so your pet will need a special diet as indicated by the veterinary nutritionist.

WHAT ARE THE COMPLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH E-TUBES?

Any medical procedure can result in unexpected complications. We take proactive steps to prevent the below complications, but you should be aware that these can occur.

- **Anesthesia:** The procedure requires general anesthesia, which in itself can occasionally lead to minor or serious complications. By the time your pet goes home, any danger from anesthesia is in the past.
- **Infection:** The site where the tube enters through the skin and into the esophagus can become infected, so it is important to keep it clean. We will provide instructions on how to clean the feeding tube site daily to prevent this.
- **Tube Displacement:** Another concern is that your pet might displace the tube, either by pulling it out or being displaced into the stomach. If the tube does become displaced, please contact your veterinarian for further direction. If the tube is accidentally pulled out, it will likely need to be replaced under anesthesia if the tube is still needed.
- **Volume Issues:** Another complication is not tolerating the volume of food. Since the food is diluted with water to in order to be thin enough to go through the feeding tube, some pets may not be able to tolerate larger volumes of food. This is why we gradually work your pet up to the final amounts of foods over several days.
- **Clogging:** One final complication is that the tube can become clogged with food. We describe how to deal with this in the final discharge instructions.

HOW OFTEN DO I NEED TO FEED THROUGH THE FEEDING TUBE?

You can expect to feed your pet **a minimum of four times a day** through the feeding tube. Since the food we use to feed through the feeding tube is liquid, it requires more volume of food than your pet is used to. This requires a transition period to get your pet used to the new volumes of food in which we will instruct you how to gradually increase the amount of food over 4-7 days. Occasionally we may be able to reduce the feedings to three times a day, but we are often limited by your pet's stomach volume limitations. Each feeding usually takes about one hour to complete. This includes preparing the diet and doing the actual feeding.

HOW DO I MAKE THE DIET FOR THE FEEDING TUBE?

Typically, a prescription diet is selected that meets your pet's needs and blends well to fit through your pet's feeding tube. This can be a kibble (dry) or canned diet blended with water to make a "slurry" or thin smoothie that flows easily through the feeding tube. You will need a high-speed blender to make your pet's food. There are pre-made smoothies for dogs and cats that flow easily through the feeding tubes. These usually are required for small feeding tube sizes and more expensive.

WHAT SUPPLIES WILL BE SENT HOME WITH MY PET?

At the time of discharge, the nutrition service will review the personalized instructions for your pet's feeding plan with you and provide a short demo of the process. In addition, the following supplies will be sent home:

- A set of **syringes** to use for feeding for about one week
- E-tube **neck band** to keep E-tube tucked in
- E-tube **replacement parts** for 1-2 weeks
- E-tube **site care and cleaning supplies** for one week (gauze, cleaning solution)
- The **blended diet** so you do not have to worry about blending the food the first two days

WHAT DO I NEED?

- High speed blender** to blend the food into a liquid consistency.
- Measuring supplies:** Dry measuring cups, +/- Kitchen gram scale
- The prescribed diet.** This can be ordered through your local veterinarian.
- An **E-collar** (plastic cone) is highly effective at preventing your pet from pulling, rubbing, or scratching at the feeding tube and pulling it out. This is highly recommended.

For long term use supplies, we recommend looking at Kittykollar.com for high quality syringes, replacement parts, and comfortable neck wraps. <https://kittykollar.com/>

Tip: Using food grade glycerin to coat the inside of the syringes can make them easier to use

- <https://www.amazon.ca/Now-Foods-Vegetable-Glycerin-473/dp/B006TWSWSU/>

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THE PROCESS?

YouTube Videos:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-eviqPIZ2Y>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XuqxYxDiY18&t=320s>

WHAT DOES A TYPICAL FEEDING LOOK LIKE?

Below are general instructions on how to feed your pet using the E-tube. Specific quantities are not mentioned here because the specific quantities are provided on the discharge instructions provided when you pick up your pet.

Feeding:

- 1. Prepare the Diet.** If not already prepared, make the diet slurry as instructed on discharge instructions. If the diet was already made and had been stored in the refrigerator, please mix the slurry well for at least 1 minute to thin out the consistency. If necessary, you can try blending it again if you have trouble with the consistency. Warming the slurry will also thin it out.
- 2. Load the diet into the syringes.** If previously refrigerated, **warm the diet to room temperature** by placing the syringe of food in a container of warm water OR running the syringe under a stream of warm water. The temperature of the food should not exceed body temperature. There are many different types of syringes available. Bigger syringes sometimes can be more difficult to push, so you may trial different syringe sizes to see what is most comfortable for you. Gloves are not necessary for handling the E-tube, however, please make sure to wash your hands before handling and keep it as clean as possible.
- 3. Check the E-Tube is in place.** Make sure your pet is awake and sitting up in a sternal position or sitting. Remove the plug from the Kangaroos Adapter or the Christmas Tree Adapter at the end of the E-tube and set aside close by. Attach the syringe to the tubing. Unclamp the tube. Pull back on the syringe plunger. If the tube is in place, the plunger should move back to its starting position on its own (negative pressure). Clamp the E-tube and replace the plug on the Kangaroo Adapter or the Christmas Tree Adapter at the end of the E-tube. Proceed to step 3. *If the plunger does NOT move back to its starting position, DO NOT PROCEED WITH FEEDING.* The E-tube may be displaced, and you should call a veterinarian for further instructions.
- 4. Flush the E-tube first with water.** Fill a syringe with the directed amount of warm water. Remove the plug from the Kangaroo Adapter or the Christmas Tree Adapter at the end of the E-tube and set aside close by. Attach the syringe with water to the tube. Unclamp the tube. **Flush the tube with the directed amount of lukewarm water.** Clamp the E-tube and remove the syringe.
- 5. Feed.** Attach the feeding tube syringe to the E-tube. Unclamp the tube. **Infuse the prescribed amount of diet slurry through the tube over at least 15-20 minutes.** Usually a rate of about 10-15 ml per minute will work well. Monitor for signs of nausea (licking lips, drooling, retching). If these are observed, first slow down the rate of feeding. If this does not alleviate the nausea, discontinue feeding and resume at the next scheduled mealtime but at a slower rate than the first feeding. If nausea is still observed, stop the feeding and contact us. When finished, clamp the E-tube and remove the syringe.
- 6. Flush the E-tube.** Attach the flush syringe. Unclamp the E-tube. **Flush the tube with the directed amount of lukewarm water.** Clamp the E-tube, remove the syringe, and replace the plug of the Kangaroo Adapter or the Christmas Tree Adapter at the end of the E-tube. Tuck the E-tube securely into the neck wrap.



MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION – TABLETS AND CAPSULES

1. Remove the plunger from the syringe casing.



2. Cover the end of the syringe casing with your finger. Add the broken up or crushed tablet or the contents of the capsule to the syringe casing.



3. Add water to the syringe with the tip of the syringe pointed downwards. Water is dyed red for demonstrative purposes.



4. Gently replace the plunger into the syringe casing so a seal is formed.



5. With your finger still covering the end of the syringe, flip the syringe so the plunger is facing down. Remove your finger from the top of the syringe casing (some water may escape from the tip of the syringe).



6. GENTLY twist the plunger into the casing to reduce the air in the syringe.



7. Cover the tip of the syringe again and shake the syringe to dissolve the medication.