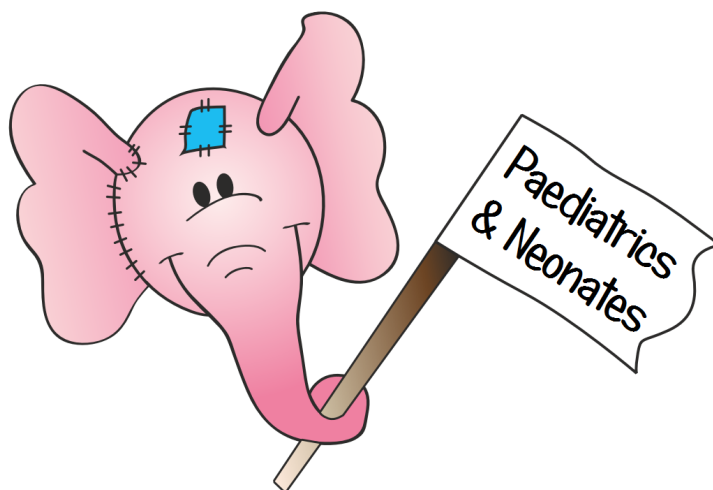


# Checking the position of nasogastric tubes

**Children's Ward**

**Parent/Carer Information Leaflet**



## Introduction

This leaflet is for parents/carers who are looking after a baby or child who is using a nasogastric feeding tube. It gives information on the importance of checking the position of the feeding tube, how to do this and the risks of the tubes.

## What are nasogastric feeding tubes?

They are small tubes that are inserted through the nose, down the back of the throat and food pipe and into the stomach. They are used to give liquid food to children who have difficulty swallowing or feeding.

## Why is it important to check the position of the tube?

It is to ensure that the feed goes directly into the stomach and not into the lungs. It should be checked:

- before putting feed, water or medicines down the tube
- after a coughing fit
- after your child has been sick

## How do I check the position of the tube?

The most reliable way to check the position of the tube is to measure the pH of your child's stomach contents using pH indicator sticks. pH indicator sticks measure how acidic or alkaline stomach contents are. The sticks have a colour code chart for the pH reading; from pH 1 (acid), through pH 7 (neutral) to pH 14 (alkaline).

## How do I use the pH indicator sticks?

We will show you how to do this before you leave hospital.

**Remember: keep pH strips or paper clean and dry, by storing them in a sealed container.**

- Wash your hands before and after checking the tube position.
- Remove the cap or plug from the nasogastric feeding tube.
- Attach a syringe to the feeding tube.
- Draw back the syringe to obtain a few drops of the contents from the stomach (this is called aspirating).
- Take the pH stick and place a few drops of the stomach contents onto it.
- Match the colour change of the pH stick with the colour code on the box to identify the pH of the stomach contents.
- A pH reading of below five indicates an acid reaction which means the tube is correctly positioned in the stomach.

## What if I cannot get any fluid for checking the pH?

- Check the tube length to see if the tube seems to have moved since it was first inserted.
- If your child is able to drink, give them one and wait for a few minutes and try again.
- Turn your child onto their side, if this is possible.
- Draw back the syringe to try and obtain contents from the stomach.

## What if I get a pH reading of more than five?

If your child has just had a feed or is on continuous feeds, the milk in the stomach can increase the pH of stomach contents which means they become more alkaline. If your child is having medication that reduces the acid in the stomach, you may also get a pH reading of more than five.

It is important that you speak to your child's nurse or doctor to find out if this is normal.

### **If a pH of more than five is measured, follow these instructions:**

- for a child having continuous feeds, stop the feed, wait for up to one hour and test the pH level again.
- for a child having feeds at regular intervals, known as bolus feeds, wait for up to one hour after feeding and test the pH level again.

**If you are still unable to obtain contents from the stomach, or the pH is still above five after testing it again, you should contact your community nurse or hospital professional on following number.**

**Community nurse or health professional contact details:**

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## What are the risks of nasogastric feeding tubes?

Using nasogastric feeding tubes to provide nutrition is a very common procedure in the NHS. Thousands of tubes are used safely every year and it is a vital part of care, particularly for people who have difficulty in swallowing or feeding.

However, some methods to check the placement of these tubes have been shown to be less reliable than others and, very rarely, things do go wrong. If the tube is not correctly inserted, it can accidentally be placed into the lungs instead of the stomach. This can happen without the patient, staff member or carer realising, as the patient may not experience any symptoms that indicate there is a problem.

The National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) is aware of 11 deaths and one case of serious harm in the last two years due to misplaced nasogastric feeding tubes. This information has been developed on conjunction with the NPSA to provide a guide to parents and carers about the most reliable testing methods they can use. Whilst no method is 100 per cent reliable, this information will help you to reduce the very small risk of accidentally putting feed through a misplaced nasogastric feeding tube.

If you have any questions or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Children's ward on 01384 244271

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

**This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:**

<http://dudleygroup.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/paediatrics-and-neonatology/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email [patient.information@dgh.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@dgh.nhs.uk)

**This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.**

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Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

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Aceasta brosură poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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