

Nasogastric feeding during radiotherapy treatment

Information for patients
and carers



Why do I need a Nasogastric (feeding) tube?

Before starting your treatment, the team will have discussed with you the possibility of needing a feeding tube and the options available for this. The impact of side-effects on your eating and drinking may require you to have a nasogastric tube placed to help support your nutrition. It is important that you stay as well-nourished as possible during radiotherapy treatment. Weight loss may result in longer treatment times and additional scans. Being well nourished can:

- Make you feel stronger and help you cope with treatment
- Prevent / Reduce weight loss
- Reduce the risk of developing infection
- Help you recover and heal after finishing treatment

Radiotherapy side-effects that can affect your eating and drinking

- Thick, sticky saliva that is difficult to clear
- Changes in the way your food tastes
- Pain and soreness in your mouth or throat
- A dry mouth
- Nausea
- Feeling tired
- Changes in the coordination of your swallow causing a risk of chest infection

Tube placement is required during radiotherapy when you are no longer able to eat enough to maintain your weight.

Nasogastric Tube placement

Your tube can be placed as an inpatient (on the ward) or as an outpatient in Princess Royal Suite/Radiology. Your Dietitian or Doctor will discuss with you the most appropriate option. Their decision may depend on other symptoms/ needs for care that you may have.

Inpatient feeding and training

Inpatient feeding will require admission to the ward for tube placement and to start feeding. Whilst you are on the ward, training will be arranged with our enteral feeding nurses, but ward nursing staff may begin this training sooner. Family/ carers are welcome to attend the training and this can be arranged at a convenient time for you (please inform your Dietitian if there is someone you would like to be trained). You may need to be admitted for up to a week to allow for confidence with the tube and equipment, but we will try to get you home as soon and as safely as possible. As this training may require you to be in the hospital for several days, please make arrangements for the care of family members or pets during this time.

Outpatient feeding and training

Outpatient feeding will require daily attendance to the Princess Royal suite for feeding and training. You will have daily feeding and training sessions until you feel confident with the tube and equipment. You will need to allow 4-5 hours before/after your treatment to allow for feeding and training. Please make arrangements to allow for the extra time at hospital. If you use hospital transport we will rearrange this for you. We will continue to provide training until you are independent with the tube, which can take up to one week.

Following training

Once you have completed your training, the Dietitian will agree with you a feeding plan for home. You will be provided with an initial supply of feed and equipment. Your Dietitian will register you with a feeding company who will provide monthly deliveries of feed and the necessary equipment.

What do I do if I have a problem with my tube?

Before you go home, your Dietitian will provide you with a list of contact details that you can use if you have any questions or problems with your tube. Your Dietitian will continue to see you at least weekly for the remainder of your radiotherapy treatment. The radiotherapy nurses in Princess Royal Suite are also available to provide assistance with the tube during your treatment.

Can I still eat and drink with my tube?

You can continue to eat and drink when you have a nasogastric tube in place (unless advised otherwise by your Speech and Language therapist or doctor).

How long will I need a feeding tube?

It is important to maintain your weight after treatment to help your recovery. You will need to keep your tube in place until you are able to take enough food and drink by mouth. This can vary from person to person but may take at least 4-6 weeks after treatment. Your local Dietitian will continue to support you to improve your oral intake, monitor your weight and will be able to recommend when the tube should be removed.

Contact Numbers

Radiotherapy Dietitians: 0113 2068133

Mon-Fri 8.30-16.30

Princess Royal Suite: 0113 2067587

Mon-Fri 8.00-18.00

Personal Notes

You may find it helpful to write down any questions you might have:

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