

MND and Gastrostomy: Troubleshooting



Below are some tips to help prevent and resolve common issues that people with gastrostomy tubes may experience.

Tube Blockages

Causes:

- Poorly crushed and dissolved medications
- Not flushing the gastrostomy tube with water before and after feeds
- Leaving feed in the tube to curdle
- Putting vitamised food down the gastrostomy tube

How to unblock:

Firstly, make sure tube clamp is open.

- 1) Flush 50mL warm water, OR
- 2) Massage the tube with your finger and thumb to dislodge the blockage, OR
- 3) Half fill the syringe with water and use a gentle plunging/pulsating action with the syringe plunger to flush the blockage down the tube.

If none of these methods have worked, contact your **healthcare team** for assistance.

Dirty Tube

It is important to **flush water** down your tube after every feed. If you are not putting feeds down the tube, it is still important to regularly flush your tube to keep it clean. This is the most effective way to keep your tube clean and last for longer.

Hospital-grade wire brushes are available. These should only be used by a trained medical professional due to risk of damage to the tube and/or yourself.

If you are concerned about your tube becoming dirty, speak to your Dietitian or Doctor.



Example of a single-use small wire brush
Not recommended for use by the general public

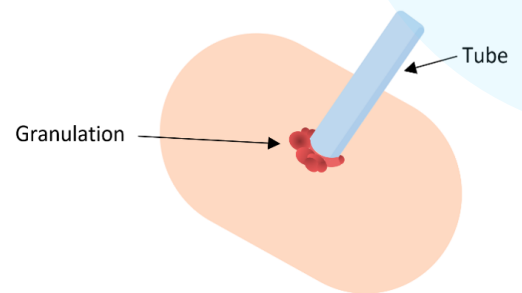
Skin Irritation

Hypergranulation

Granulation tissue is light red flesh that appears around the exit site of the PEG tube. It can be smooth, bumpy or granular and normally appears six weeks after the procedure as part of the healing phase. Often this will resolve naturally, however sometimes it may need treating.

Routine care should include:

- Daily washing and drying of the skin around the exit site
- Keeping the exit site free of moisture
- Preventing excess movement by taping the external tube to your skin



Treatment for non-resolving or irritated granulation tissue may include:

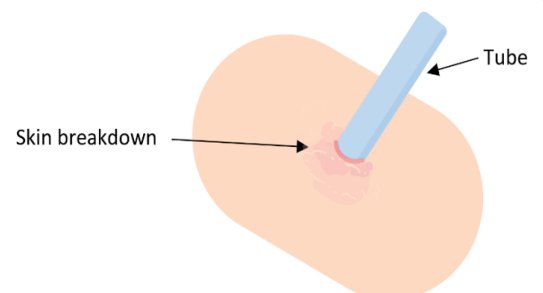
- Applying pressure via foam dressing to reduce granulation
- Application of silver nitrate to granulation tissue
- Application of a steroid cream

Skin Breakdown

Irritation to the skin can cause it to start breaking down. This may occur around the exit site due to leaking of stomach acid or too much moisture causing the skin to become irritated.

Routine care should include:

- Keeping the exit site clean and dry
- Changing dressings frequently to limit moisture



Treatment for skin breakdown may include:

- Application of a barrier cream
- Medications to reduce the amount of gastric acid in the stomach
- Using a foam dressing or gauze to absorb excess leakage

If you are concerned about issue granulation or skin breakdown, speak to your Doctor.

Infections

Signs:

- Redness
- Swelling
- Bleeding
- Discharge
- Warmth at site
- Foul smell

What can be done:

- Wash and dry the skin around the exit site daily
- Limit excess moisture to prevent getting an infection
- Antifungals or antibiotics may be given to you by your doctor to treat an infection

Bleeding

Bleeding around the PEG tube may result from being accidentally bumped or rubbed. Apply direct pressure with a clean cloth, tissue, or piece of gauze for up to 10 minutes. If bleeding persists, call Flinders Medical Centre Endoscopy for advice.

Bleeding inside the PEG tube is not normal and you should contact Flinders Medical Centre Endoscopy or ring Emergency 000.

Tightness

If the PEG tube feels tight against the skin and is difficult to turn, it could be that your bumper is fixed too tightly. Call Flinders Medical Centre Endoscopy to schedule a time to have your tube reviewed.

Bowel Issues

You may experience:

- Constipation
- Diarrhoea
- Nausea/vomiting
- Bloating

If you frequently experience these issues while using your PEG, your Dietitian may:

- Ask about how you are preparing and delivering your feed
- Change the **type** of feed you are using (e.g. added fibre)
- Change the **volume** of your feed
- Change the **rate** of your feed

Do you have a different issue with your gastrostomy tube?

Contact Flinders Medical Centre Endoscopy on (08) 8204 4693 or (08) 8204 5177