

Weaning off Tube Feedings



“Saying Hello to Food and Good Bye to Formula”

Now that your treatment is nearing completion or over it’s time to start working on eating more food by mouth and using the feeding tube less.

It may be hard to think about eating more if you’ve experienced taste changes, decreased appetite, a feeling of being full, or swallowing difficulties. Here are some tips to help you increase your intake of food.

- ❖ **It is important to eat small amounts of food every 2-3 hours to help your appetite recover. Even if you aren’t hungry try to eat a few bites of something**
 - Set your phone or oven alarm for 2 hours to remind you to eat
 - Small, single portions are helpful, especially at first. Looking at a full platter of soup, entrée, salad, and dessert may be visually overwhelming. Start with a small 4 oz portion of one item at first, and gradually chip away at it until you have consumed it.

- ❖ **Foods High in Calories and Protein will allow you to meet your calorie and protein needs without having to eat as frequently.**
 - Add cheese to scrambled eggs
 - Switch to whole milk
 - Add honey, butter or sugar to hot cereals
 - Add powdered milk to moist food to increase the calorie content.
 - Milkshakes
 - Use nutrition supplements such as Boost Plus, Ensure Plus, Carnation Instant Breakfast each day. You can drink them plain, freeze them or mix into smoothies or milkshakes

- ❖ **Choose soft, moist foods that are easier to swallow.**
 - Moist scrambled eggs with cheese
 - Whipped yogurts or Greek yogurt
 - Pudding (make with whole milk)
 - Mashed potatoes with or without gravy
 - Cream of wheat or moist oatmeal
 - Macaroni and cheese
 - Pureed squash or sweet potato
 - Applesauce
 - Diced fruit in syrup
 - Cottage Cheese

- ❖ **For every can of Boost or Ensure Plus you drink you can decrease your tube feeding formula by a can.**

- ❖ **Tips to help increase Taste**
 - Try foods that you've never had before, so you have no memory of how the food is supposed to taste. Try Korean, Caribbean, Thai or Indian foods that have a lot of flavors.
 - Try adding mustard, honey soy sauce, sweet or sweet and sour sauce to bland starches to give more flavor
 - Avoid combination dishes, such as casseroles, that can hide individual flavors and dilute taste
 - Prepare foods with a lot of color and textures
 - Try these tart foods: 100% cranberry juice, 100% cherry juice, persimmon juice, granny smith apples

- ❖ **Relying on our tube to provide you with nutrition can sometimes prevent you from getting hungry or eating more. Talk to your speech therapist or dietitian about a good time to do a tube feeding- free trial with eating (you will deliberately hold off on tube feedings for a few days to see how you do with eating).**

- ❖ **When you are able to eat for a week without using your feeding tube and your weight is stable call your care team to discuss the possibility of having your tube removed.**

- ❖ **Remember to drink a lot of fluid as dehydration can result if fluid is not being sipped on throughout the day.**
 - Keep a water bottle with you at all times to sip on
 - Try flavoring water with lemon juice, lime juice, cucumbers, Crystal Light
 - Try Gatorade, Powerade or Propel to help with hydration when fluid intake is difficult

- ❖ **Data from previous patients has shown the average to have a feeding tube in place is 6 months with an average of having it for 3 ½ months after treatment has been completed. Of course that means some people had it out quicker and some needed it longer.**

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