

Let's Talk About...

Gastrostomy Tube: Giving your child food and medicine through a tube

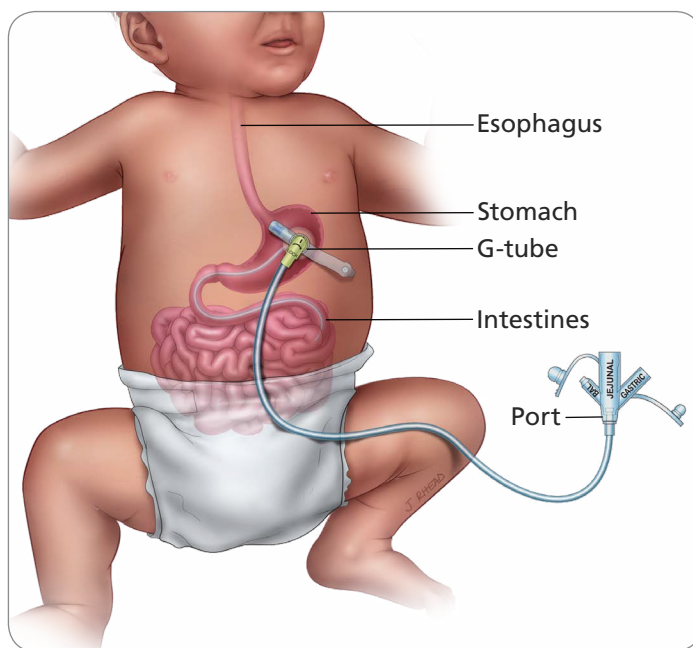
What is a G-tube?

Some kids have medical problems that prevent them from being able to get enough nutrition by mouth. A gastrostomy [gas-STRAW-stuh-mee] tube (also called a G-tube) is a tube inserted through the abdomen (belly) to deliver nutrition directly into the stomach. This is called enteral [EN-ter-al] feeding (feeding through a tube into the body). It's one of the ways doctors can make sure kids who have trouble eating can get the fluids and calories they need to grow.

Why might my child need a G-tube?

Your child may need a G-tube if they can't eat or drink or have a medical problem that keeps them from getting enough nutrients. Some examples include:

- Abnormalities of the mouth, esophagus, stomach, or intestines due to birth defects
- Sucking and swallowing problems, which are often related to premature birth, brain injury, developmental delay, or certain neuromuscular [new-row-MUH-skew-ler] conditions, such as cerebral palsy
- Failure to thrive, which is a general diagnosis for children that don't gain weight and grow as expected
- Severe reflux (frequent vomiting after feedings)
- Injury to the esophagus (the tube that carries food from the throat to the stomach)



How does a G-tube work?

During a G-tube feeding, food and medicine can be given through gravity feeding or a machine that pumps the liquids through the tube and into your child's stomach. By not using the mouth and esophagus, feedings can be given slowly all the time. They can also be spaced out at regularly scheduled times.

Is a G-tube permanent?

Some children will always need the tube. However, each child is different. If your child can eat and drink enough to keep their body growing, the tube can come out. This is usually done without surgery.

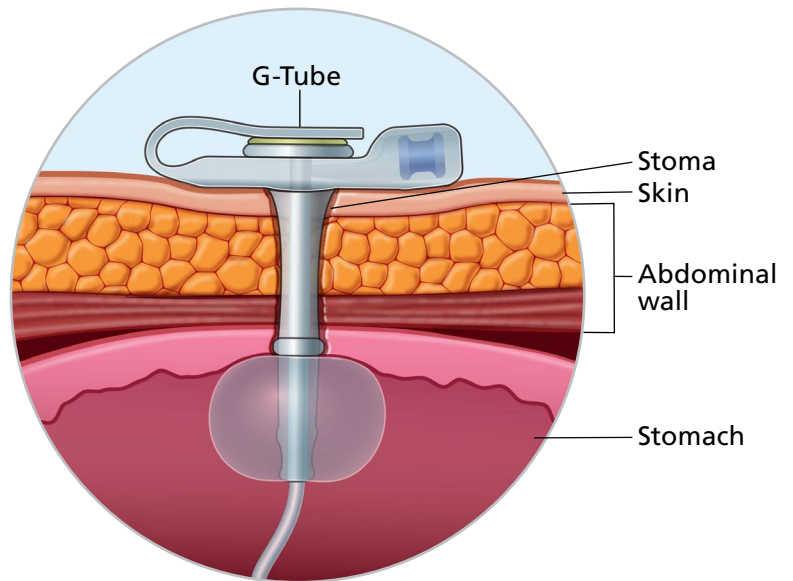
How is a G-tube placed?

A gastrostomy is a surgery that creates a small hole called a **stoma** [STOW-muh] from outside the skin into the stomach. After the hole is made, a healthcare provider puts a feeding tube, called a **G-tube**, into the hole. Some children will have the G-tube for a few months while others may have it their whole lives.

How will I learn how to care for my child's G-tube?

While you are at the hospital, you will learn how to care for your child's new G-tube. You will learn how to care for your child's G-tube by:

- **Hands-on learning at your child's bedside.** Nurses will teach you, step-by-step, how to take care of the G-tube and give your child formula and medicine.
- **Watching the G-tube video** on the education channel at the hospital. You can also watch it at home at the link: [youtube.com/watch?v=B4tKh51XJ6Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B4tKh51XJ6Y).
- **Attending a free community G-tube caregiver class.** Taught by gastrostomy nurses, this class is open to all caregivers and will help you learn to care for your child's G-tube. Ask your bedside nurse for details.
- **Learning where to get the supplies** you will need to care for your child's G-tube.



Can my child swim or bathe with a G-tube?

Your child should not get the G-tube site wet for the first 8 weeks. Your healthcare provider will tell you how to bathe your child. After your child's surgery site heals completely, they can swim and bathe.

Can I still feed my child by mouth when they have a G-tube?

Each child is different. Some children can eat food by mouth (along with G-tube feedings), but others can't. Talk to your child's healthcare provider to see if it's possible for your child to eat food by mouth.

Notes

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