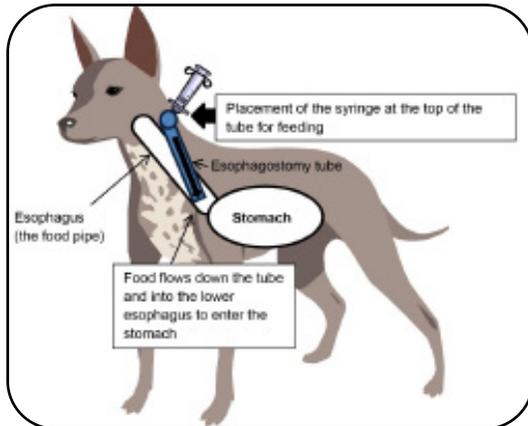


# E-Tube Feeding Instructions and Home Care



<http://vhc.missouri.edu>

and medicine by mouth, the tube can be removed. The tube does not enter the stomach; rather, it begins and ends in the esophagus. Food must enter the tube slowly so that it can be passed into the stomach slowly. Although these tubes can be lifesaving, feeding via tube and care of the tube require a dedicated pet owner.

## Why does an animal need an e-tube?

There are a variety of reasons a pet may need an E-tube, but usually it is because the pet cannot or will not take in enough calories to meet nutrition requirements. The tube also offers an easy way to administer many medications. Your pet can go home with an E-tube in place and does not need to stay in the hospital. You can feed a variety of diets by way of the tube, but they must be in the form of a slurry.

## What are the complications associated with e-tubes?

Any medical procedure can result in unexpected complications. The procedure requires general anesthesia, which can occasionally lead to minor or serious complications. By the time your pet goes home, any danger from anesthesia is in the past. The site where the tube enters through the skin and into the esophagus can become infected, so it is important to keep it clean. If it becomes red, is warm to the touch or has an abnormal discharge (e.g., pus), or if your pet acts in pain when you touch the site, contact a veterinarian. Another concern is that your pet might displace the tube, either by pulling it out or vomiting the tube out of the esophagus and into their mouth. If the tube does become displaced, contact a veterinarian immediately as it can often be replaced if you act quickly. The last common complication is that the tube can become clogged with food. We describe how to deal with this in the Monitoring and Tube Care section, but if you cannot resolve the clog yourself, see your veterinarian.

**Thank you to Texas A&M University  
for providing this information.**

## What is an esophagostomy tube?

Your pet has had a type of feeding tube called an esophagostomy tube (E-tube) placed. This tube enters the esophagus (the food pipe) from a surgical incision on the left side of the neck. It allows your pet to be fed until its appetite or ability to eat has returned, and it also makes giving oral medications much simpler. Having the tube in place will not prevent your pet from eating and drinking on its own if it wishes to do so. In fact, eating by is usually encouraged! Once your pet can get all necessary food

# E-Tube Feeding

## Instructions and Home Care

### Diet Information

Until your pet's appetite returns, you will need to feed enough to meet the minimum daily energy requirement, which has been calculated for you. In an ideal world, you would divide the feedings into four per day. If this is not possible, please let us know, and we will develop another feeding schedule. Although the feedings should be spaced out, they do not have to be given at exact times. Feeding at breakfast, lunch, dinner and bedtime is appropriate. Refer to the information below for feeding instructions and tube care.

#### Your pet's diet:

- Amount of food needed for daily caloric needs:
- Your pet's food recipe:
- DAY ONE:
- DAY TWO:
- DAY THREE and on:

As your pet begins to eat more food by mouth, you can decrease the amount you feed through the tube either by cutting out a feeding or feeding less at each meal.

### Feeding instructions

Easy to read notes about your pet's diet and instructions at the end of document. Please post in a convenient location and use to keep track of amounts, feedings and any notes to alert the veterinarian about.

**Step 1: Check that the tube is in place.** Remove the end of the tube from the neck wrap. Before each feeding, attach an empty syringe (10 ml) to the external feeding port and pull back on the plunger. If the tube is in place, the plunger should move back to its starting position on its own (negative pressure), and you may proceed to step 2. If the plunger does NOT move back to its starting position, DO NOT PROCEED WITH FEEDING. The E-tube may be displaced, and you should call a veterinarian for further instructions.

**Step 2: Flush the tube with water.** Give 10 ml (for a dog) 6 ml (for a cat) of lukewarm water through the E-tube. If there is no cough, gag, retch or discomfort, prepare an extra syringe with lukewarm water to use for flushing the tube when the feeding is complete. If coughing or gagging DOES occur, DO NOT PROCEED WITH FEEDING. The tube may be displaced, and your pet needs to be brought to a veterinarian to check the placement of the E-tube.

**Step 3: Warm the blended diet.** Keep opened containers of the blended diet refrigerated between feedings. (The refrigerated blenderized food is good for 24 hours) Before each feeding, slightly warm the expected feeding volume (see above under diet information for amount) to room temperature. The best way to warm the food is to fill the syringes with the amount of food to be fed and place them in a container of warm water or run under warm water. Due to the risk of overheating, we do NOT recommend using the microwave. The temperature can be tested by placing a small amount on your wrist like checking the temperature of a baby bottle. The food should be room temperature to lukewarm, not hot or cold.

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**Step 4: Feeding. Attach the syringe to the feeding port.** This will require you to remove the cap on the port but keep the cap in easy reach. After that is done, you can begin slowly pushing the plunger on the syringe to administer the food. It is important to feed the liquid diet slowly (i.e., each meal over 20-30 minutes) since the food is not going directly into the stomach but instead into the esophagus. If the pet begins to act nauseated during the feeding, it is time to stop or at least slow down dramatically. If they become too full, your pet will likely throw up! Signs of nausea include but not limited to, excessive drooling, vomiting, lip licking, swallowing multiple times, saliva that looks like shoestrings from their jowls, howling, or restlessness. If your pet becomes nauseated, stop the feeding! Give your pet a 15-minute break and resume feeding at a slower rate. If your pet is STILL nauseated, stop the feeding and call your veterinarian.

**Step 5: Finishing.** Once the food syringe is emptied, detach the food syringe and attach the extra syringe of water. Flush the E-tube with 10 mL (for a dog) or 6 ml (for a cat) of water. You can give the water a bit faster than you did the food. Once you are done, remove the syringe, and re-attach the cap on the end of the tube. Place the tube back into the Velcro on the E-tube collar so that your pet can't easily pull the tube out. Rinse out the syringes so that they are ready for next time, and you are done until the next meal.

Giving medications through the E-tube can be done with veterinarian approval of each medication needing to be administered. Once veterinarian approval, medication administration can be done. If giving at a meal time, administer 10 ml (if a dog) or 6 ml (if a cat), administer the medication (s) in a water slurry, administer the food as directed above, then water to follow. If medication is to be given on an empty stomach, give appropriate amount of water, medication in slurry, and appropriate amount of water following medication administration.

## Troubleshooting

If the feeding tube becomes clogged, check for kinks in the external tube. Flush with water. If this is unsuccessful, put some Coca-Cola (2-3 mls) in the tube and let it sit for 10 minutes. Flush with water.

## Cleaning and changing e-tube site

Repeat DAILY for the first week.

1. Remove the E-tube collar by undoing the wide Velcro strip that holds the collar closed. Undo the thin Velcro strip on the outside of the collar that holds the e-tube down. Slide the collar down the e-tube so you can reach the site where it enters the skin (E-tube collar CAN be washed & dried if becomes wet or dirty.)
2. Carefully remove the round pad; discard this. (Can purchase more pads at any general store, make-up section)
3. Clean the outside of the tube gently with the povidone iodine swabs (Will stain fabric & surfaces) or clean tap water
4. Make a slit in a new round pad and slide it onto the e-tube so it sits against the skin
5. Slide the collar back down to the neck. Fasten the wide Velcro at the neck under the chin so it stays on. Secure the e-tube to the collar (so the collar cannot spin around) with the thin Velcro strip at the back.

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**After the first week:** Check the tube site every day or two. If the site is clean and dry, no action is needed. If the tube site is red or moist, clean as directed above and apply a clean pad over the site.

**Call the veterinarian if:** The tube site is very red or painful. The round pad is filled with discharge. The stitch(es) holding the tube are displaced or broken.

## Feeding Chart

**Daily kcal requirement:**

**Diet:**

**Recipe:**

Feeding Time	% RER	6 am Feeding	2 pm Feeding	10 pm Feeding	Notes
Day 1	33%				
Day 2	66%				
Day 3	100%				
Day 4	100%				
Day 5	100%				
Day 6	100%				
Day 7	100%				

\* Feeding times can be adjusted to fit your schedule\*

\* Keep blenderized food in refrigerator\*

\* Blenderized food is good for 24 hours\*

*This information has been provided by the Veterinary Cancer Society. Please consult your veterinary oncologist, or your pet's primary care veterinarian, if you have any questions related to the information provided on this document.*