Giving Medications Through a Feeding Tube

The feeding tube is sometimes used to administer medications to those patients who have difficulty swallowing. Medications may be prescribed in liquid form to go through the tube easily. Some medications may only be available in pill form and need to be crushed small enough to go through the tube without clogging it. (Please check with your hospice nurse before giving any medications through a feeding tube.)

Giving the medication:

- Position patient on back with head elevated at least 45 degrees.
- Wash your hands before handling the tubing and medication.
- Prepare one medication at a time. Use liquid medication when possible. Crush tablets or open capsules and dissolve in at least 30cc of water. Always check with your nurse for a list of which medications may be crushed.
- Unclamp the feeding tube.
- Uncap the end of the feeding tube or remove the covering.
- Check the tube for proper placement to be sure it is safe to give the feeding.
- Attach a 60 cc syringe to the end of the feeding tube and pull back on the plunger. You will probably feel some resistance. Within a few seconds you should be able to see stomach fluid (it will be yellow-green) enter the tubing. If you can’t remove any fluid, help the patient move and turn a little. Try again to draw up some fluid. Always put back in anything you draw out of the stomach by pushing in the plunger. If you do not see stomach fluid, do not continue and call your Arbor Hospice nurse.
- Remove the plunger from the syringe. Put the end of the syringe into the opening of the tube. Raise the syringe above the level of the stomach, but not more than 12 inches above the stomach.
• Slowly pour in 20-30ml of warm water, letting it drain in by gravity. If the water flows in easily, then follow with the medicine. If the water does not flow easily, raise or lower the height of the syringe.

• Administer one medication at a time.

• Flush tube with 20-30ml of water between medications.

• Flush tube with 60ml of warm water after the final medication.

• If patient is on continuous feedings, please check with hospice nurse to see if it is necessary to hold feedings before or after administration of medications

• Clamp off the tube and remove the syringe or funnel.

• Plug or cap the end of the tube.

• Wash the syringe and plunger in warm, soapy water and rinse thoroughly. Air dry and store in a clean covered container.

Medications that can be crushed:

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Medications that should not be crushed:

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Special instructions:

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Please feel free to call your Arbor Hospice team any time with questions or concerns you may have about giving medication through a feeding tube. We want to be responsive to your needs and concerns.