

Nasogastric tube

What is a nasogastric tube?

A nasogastric tube is a thin soft tube that is passed through your child's nostril, down the back of the throat, through the oesophagus (food pipe) and into the stomach. It is designed to provide fluids, liquid food and medications if they are unable to take them orally.

The reasons for a nasogastric tube

The common reasons for a nasogastric tube to be inserted include:

- If your child has problems with their sucking or swallowing
- If your child is not getting enough nutrition through their normal diet
- If your child cannot swallow the medications they need. This may be as a result of a gastro or viral illness, severe tonsillitis, or failure-to-thrive in infants.

Insertion of the nasogastric tube

Inserting a nasogastric tube is generally not a painful procedure but can be rather uncomfortable. Your child may require a light sedative medication to help them relax before it is inserted. This will be determined by their doctor.

Two nurses will assist with inserting the tube. Here are some tips to assist you and your child with the procedure:

- Keep your child as relaxed and distracted as possible (blowing bubbles, playing with toys or watching a movie may assist)
- Wrapping babies and young children firmly will help contain their arms and provide security
- Hold your child's hand during the procedure to ensure they do not pull at the tube
- Encourage them to swallow, or have sips of water or suck on a dummy – this will help the tube slide down the back of the throat

If hospitalised

Admission

The admission process is an opportunity to discuss your child's hospital stay and any special needs they may have while in hospital or for going home.

Visiting hours

The Cabrini Paediatric Ward does not have set visiting hours.

Discharge

Your child will be discharged when your doctor is happy with their progress and condition and you are confident with caring for them at home.

Please report to the reception desk in the foyer of the hospital before leaving to finalise any administrative paperwork.

Care at home

Diet and fluids

Unless otherwise stated by your doctor, encourage your child to eat and drink while the nasogastric tube is in place. Once they are tolerating adequate amounts orally and the doctor is happy with their progress, the tube will be removed.

Activity

Your child will be able to continue their normal activities with the nasogastric tube in place. It is important, however, to make sure the tube does not fall out. The tube is secured to the cheek of your child and generally taped to the back of their clothing. There should be enough slack so they can turn their head with no restriction. In young children and infants, a soft crepe bandage or a pair of socks are used to bind your child's hands to stop them from tugging at the tube.

Hygiene

Regular bathing can occur with the tube in place. Ensure the end of the tube is covered with a spigot (plug) and secured with tape. Try and avoid submerging the tube directly in water.

Discomfort

Initially, there can be some discomfort with the tube in place. This usually passes quickly. Try and keep your child distracted with books or toys. Paracetamol can be given if your child is not settling with the tube in place.

Follow-up

Please contact your doctor's rooms to organise a follow-up appointment.

When to contact your doctor

- Decreased feeding or weight loss
- Persistent vomiting and/or diarrhoea
- Persistent temperature of 38.5°C or higher
- Issues with the nasogastric tube

Questions

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact the Ward using the phone number below.

Cabrini Malvern Paediatric Ward
183 Wattletree Road, Malvern VIC 3144
03 9508 1378

Cabrini Brighton Paediatric Ward
243 New Street, Brighton VIC 3186
03 9508 5690

