



Esophagostomy Tube Feeding – Felines

An esophagostomy tube is a small rubber tube that enters a surgical incision on the side of the neck. Placement of the tube through this incision allows food to enter the esophagus and then flow down into the stomach. The tube is not placed directly into the stomach.

The esophagostomy tube is used in cats with diseases that cause long-term anorexia or in jaw fractures or other mouth injuries that prevent eating.



How do I feed my cat through the tube?

A special food, listed below, is syringed through the tube two to four times per day. This food is formulated to meet your cat's nutritional needs; it should not cause vomiting or diarrhea. To feed your cat, follow these steps:

1. Prepare the food by combining:

1 can of a high quality feline growth + 10 oz of water + 2 oz of vegetable oil + 8 potassium chloride tablets in a blender and run at the liquefy (fastest) speed until the food is uniformly mixed.

After mixing, pour the food through a kitchen strainer.

OR

2. Remove the cap from the feeding tube.

3. Using the syringes provided, inject _____ cc of the food into your cat's feeding tube _____ times per day FOR A TOTAL OF _____ cc PER 24 HOURS. It is helpful to inject the food slowly, about 1 cc per second, and to elevate your cat's front feet so the food goes easily into the stomach.

4. When the food has been injected, inject 5 cc of tap water through the tube so food does not remain in it. Replace the cap on the tube.

5. Any remaining food should be stored in the refrigerator. Before the next feeding, it should be warmed to body temperature under hot tap water or in a microwave oven. If you heat it in a microwave oven, be sure to thoroughly mix the contents prior to feeding because of uneven heating. Also, always check the temperature prior to feeding to be sure that the food is not too hot.

When and how is the tube removed?

Some cats require several weeks of tube feeding before their appetite will return or healing occurs. At least twice weekly, offer your cat a small amount of a favorite food by mouth so that you will know when its appetite is improving. The esophagostomy tube will not hinder chewing or swallowing. After your cat has been eating well for three to four days, it should be returned to the hospital for tube removal. Removal of the tube is simple and does not require anesthesia; however, you should not attempt to remove the tube on your own.

*This client information sheet is based on material written by Ernest Ward, DVM
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