

CARE OF AN ESOPHAGEAL FEEDING TUBE

Esophageal tubes are commonly used when a pet cannot or will not eat on its own for an extended period of time. These tubes are placed into the stomach via a small incision in the side of the neck. The tube is sutured in place and then bandaged.

The rubber or silastic tube that has been placed into the pet is soft and comfortable and should last for up to several months if taken care of properly. The pet will be able to eat and drink with the tube in place. Once your dog or cat is eating well on its own, the tube can be easily removed with no need for anesthesia. The tube should stay in place until your pet has eaten well for 3-4 days. Removing the tube too soon may mean a further surgery to replace it and higher risk of infection at the second surgery site.

The average size cat can tolerate about 100 ml per feeding (about 3 and 1/2 oz.). If too much food is given all at once, the stomach will become distended and the cat will vomit the food back up. You will need to start with a smaller amount at first, 60-75 ml, and work up to 100 ml over 2-3 days. If your cat tolerates 100 ml and is eating the recipe below, you will only need to feed 2 meals per day. The amount to feed a dog with a feeding tube of course depends on the size of the pet. The same rules apply, however, and you will probably start with a smaller amount and work up to larger volumes.

Your veterinarian will probably have you give just 12 cc at a time, to avoid dilating the esophagus by squirting in too much food at once. It is advisable to elevate the front legs of the cat or dog during feeding, to avoid regurgitation.

Always strain the food through a kitchen strainer before injecting it into the tube. Most foods contain an occasional chunk of bone which will block the tube if not removed. If the food you are feeding has been in the refrigerator, warm it to room temperature or a little warmer before feeding. Do not overheat the food or you can burn the esophagus, which could be fatal!

Uncap the tube and squirt in the necessary amount of food, 1 syringe full at a time. Flush tube with about 1/2 - 1 syringe full of water after feeding. Recap the tube.

Try not to get the neck bandage wet or dirty. The bandage needs to be replaced as often as necessary to keep the tube, and the skin opening where it enters the body, as clean as possible. This prevents infection.

The food you will be feeding through the tube will depend on the reason the tube was put in and what medical problems the pet may have. A common recipe used for cat feeding tubes is:

3 5.5oz cans CNM-CV canned food (palatable, blends well)
8oz water
2oz Wesson oil
____ 16mEq Tumil K (tabs or powder) added if potassium supplement is needed

Stores up to 5 days in fridge (microwave before feeding to warm).

200 ml/day = 318 kcal, 15.5 grams of protein