



Name _____

PEG (Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastrostomy) Tubes: Feeding Decisions for People with Dementia

What is a PEG Tube?

- **A Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastrostomy Tube** or PEG Tube,, is also called a *feeding tube*. One end of this flexible silicone tube sits inside the stomach and is held in place with a balloon like tip, and the other end is taped to the skin outside. Food, liquids, and medicines can be given through the PEG tube. It does not always have to be permanent or the only source of nutrition.

Why Would My Loved One Need a PEG Tube?

A PEG Tube may be needed if your loved one:

- cannot eat or drink.
- breathes in food while eating (*aspirates*).
- cannot swallow correctly.

Why Do Some People With Dementia Have Problems Eating & Drinking?

- Some people with dementia have trouble chewing and swallowing. This puts them at risk for choking or getting food in their lungs (*aspirating*).
- Some lose the feelings of hunger or thirst.
- Depression, medication side effects, constipation or illness can make some people with dementia lose interest in eating.



How Can I Decide What Is Best for My Loved One?

Deciding whether your loved one would want a feeding tube is often difficult. If you are not sure what your loved one would choose, think about the possible risks and benefits of feeding tubes for people with dementia. Decide if you believe a feeding tube would help make their life better or not.

You should think about:

- what your loved one would want.
Consider their personal, family, religious, and community values. If your loved one has a living will, read it to see if it mentions feeding tubes.
- their medical condition and treatment options.
Ask their doctor or nurse if you have any questions.

You should know that:

- feeding tubes have not been proven to stop *aspiration* (breathing in food), to help quality of life, or to help people live longer.
- a patient with advanced dementia may not be able to understand why a tube is coming out from their stomach area, and often pulls it out. If this happens, the patient may need to have their movement limited.

Are there other options for people with dementia who have trouble eating or swallowing?

- If the person can still chew and swallow, caregivers may be able to feed certain foods to the patient.
- The caregiver may be able to give ice chips, lemon drops, etc. to moisten the patient's mouth.
- Other options may include:
 - Review and change of medications. Some medications may make the patient lose their appetite.
 - Checking for depression, constipation, or pain. These conditions may make the patient lose interest in eating.
 - Emotional and spiritual support.
- Palliative Care and Hospice Care are available to help keep your loved one comfortable.



Special Instructions or Questions

How Can I Get More Information on PEG Tubes and Dementia?

Please visit NYU Langone Medical Center's consumer health library:

The Patient and Family Resource Center
Schwartz Building, Room 103
Phone: 212 263-7438

Web site: <http://www.nyupatientlibrary.org/medcenter/>

You may also email the librarian at patientlibrary@nyumc.org