Maintaining Patency of a Feeding Tube (Flushing)

Level III

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to maintain patency of a feeding tube.

Preparation

1. Verify that there is a physician's order for this procedure.
2. Review the resident's care plan and provide for any special needs of the resident.
3. Assemble equipment and supplies needed.

General Guidelines

To maintain patency of a feeding tube:

1. Flush enteral feeding tubes every four (4) hours with thirty (30) mL, or prescribed amount, of water during continuous feeding and before and after intermittent feedings.
2. Flush with thirty (30) mL, or prescribed amount, of water after checking residual stomach contents.
3. Flush enteral feeding tubes with thirty (30) mL, or prescribed amount, of water before and after administration of medications. Note: If administering more than one medication, flush with five (5) to ten (10) mL, or prescribed amount, of water between each medication.

Equipment and Supplies

The following equipment and supplies will be necessary when performing this procedure.

1. Soap and water;
2. Wash cloth and towel;
3. Sixty (60) mL enteral syringe (with transition adapter if necessary);
4. Water;
5. Stethoscope; and
6. Personal protective equipment (e.g., gowns, gloves, mask, etc., as needed).

Steps in the Procedure

1. Place the equipment on the bedside stand or overbed table. Arrange the supplies so they can be easily reached.
2. Wash and dry your hands thoroughly.
3. Wear clean gloves.
4. Position resident in semi-Fowler's or higher position.
5. Confirm placement of tube by checking gastric residual.
6. Attach sixty (60) mL syringe (and transition adapter if necessary) without plunger to tube.
7. Unclamp tube and unless otherwise ordered, pour 30 mL warm water into syringe.
8. Allow water to flow by gravity into feeding tube.

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9. Clamp tube and remove syringe. (Note: If the tube has a Y port connector, flush through the side port.)

10. Flush tube after each feeding and after each medication administration to ensure patency of feeding tube. (Note: If administering more than one medication, flush the tube with five (5) to ten (10) mL, or prescribed amount, of water between each medication.)
11. Discard disposable supplies in the designated containers.
12. Clean reusable equipment according to the manufacturer's instructions.
13. Clean the overbed table and return it to its proper position.
14. Reposition the bed covers. Make the resident comfortable.
15. Place the call light within easy reach of the resident.
16. Remove gloves and discard into designated container.
17. Wash and dry your hands thoroughly.
18. If the resident desires, return the door and curtains to the open position and if visitors are waiting, tell them they may now enter the room.

Documentation

The person performing this procedure should record the following information in the resident's medical record:

1. The date and time the procedure was performed.
2. Verification of tube placement.
3. Total amount used to flush tube.
4. The name and title of the individual(s) who performed the procedure.
5. All assessment data obtained during the procedure.
6. How the resident tolerated the procedure.
7. If the resident refused the procedure, the reason(s) why and the intervention taken.
8. The signature and title of the person recording the data.

Reporting

1. Report complications promptly to the supervisor and the Attending Physician.
2. Notify the supervisor if the resident refuses the procedure.
3. Report other information in accordance with facility policy and professional standards of practice.

References	
MDS Items (CAAs)	Section K; (CAA 13)
Related Documents	Confirming Placement of a Feeding Tube
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