Maintaining Patency of a Feeding Tube (Flushing) **Level III**

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to maintain patency of a feeding tube. To be done only by licensed or certified staff.

Preparation

1. Review the resident's care plan and provide for any special needs of the resident.
2. Assemble equipment and supplies needed.

General Guidelines

To maintain patency of a feeding tube:

1. Flush enteral feeding tubes every four (4) to six (6) hours with thirty (30) to sixty (60) ml, or prescribed amount, of warm water during continuous feeding and before and after intermittent feedings.
2. Flush with thirty (30) to sixty (60) ml, or prescribed amount, of warm water after checking residual stomach content.
3. Flush enteral feeding tubes with fifteen (15) to thirty (30) ml, or prescribed amount, of warm 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 warm 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) cc catheter tip syringe;
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. Clamp tubing.
6. Attach sixty (60) cc catheter tip syringe with 10 to 30 cc of air to tube. Unclamp tube.
7. Verify placement of tube by injecting air into tube while listening to abdomen with stethoscope for a bubbling sound.
8. Clamp tube and remove empty syringe.
9. Attach sixty (60) cc catheter tip syringe without plunger to tube. Unclamp tube and unless otherwise ordered, pour 60 ml tepid water into syringe. Allow water to flow by gravity into feeding tube.
10. Clamp tube and remove syringe. (**Note**: If the tube has a Y port connector, flush through the side port.)

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Steps in the Procedure (continued)

11. 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 warm water between each medication.)
12. Discard disposable supplies in the designated containers.
13. Clean reusable equipment according to the manufacturer's instructions.
14. Clean the overbed table and return it to its proper position.
15. Reposition the bed covers. Make the resident comfortable.
16. Place the call light within easy reach of the resident.
17. Remove gloves and discard into designated container.
18. Wash and dry your hands thoroughly.
19. 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. Amount of flush 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 (RAPs)	K5b
Survey Tag Numbers	F321; F322; F441
Related Documents	
Risk of Exposure	Blood–Body Fluids–Infectious Diseases
Procedure Revised	Date:_____ By:_____ Date:_____ By:_____ Date:_____ By:_____ Date:_____ By:_____