The esophagostomy or “E” tube makes feeding the sickly pet easy and free of mess. If you have been dealing with oral syringe feeding, meatball feeding or even nasal tubes, the E tube should be a breeze. Feeding through the tube is comfortable for the pet plus the presence of the tube in no way precludes natural eating should the pet wish to do so. As your pet begins to feel better, regular eating can readily take place without disturbing the E tube.

**TO FEED YOUR PET:**

Have everything ready before beginning. You will need:

- A syringe full of the liquid food in the appropriate amount. Be sure the food is free of any chunks that could clog the tube. Using a strainer is helpful and using some kind of a blender is a must unless you are using a commercial liquid diet that is already smooth. The diet should be warmed but not hot. Do not microwave the diet or you may get hot spots that are too hot. To warm the food, microwave/heat a tall glass of water and insert the syringe of food in the warm water and let it sit until the food is at least room temperature, and ideally close to body temperature.
- A small glass or cup of tepid water.
- Any medication you should be giving at this time.

Clear the tube by squirting 6 cc of tepid water through it to be sure it is not clogged. Next hook up the food syringe and slowly deliver the food to the patient. Follow the food with a chaser of 6 cc of tepid water to clear the tube. Give any oral medications that is scheduled. If at all possible, give the medication orally rather than through the tube as medication can form chunks which can clog the tube. If you end up giving medication through the tube, it is all the more important to clear the tube with 6 cc of tepid water after.

Periodically, you will need to change the wraps on the feeding tube and clean any discharge or crusting from the tube exit site.

**BE SURE TO ALLOW TIME FOR DIGESTION BETWEEN FEEDINGS.**

How much time depends on your pet’s feeding plan. Be sure you understand the schedule provided by your veterinarian.

**HAVING PROBLEMS?**

**Vomiting**

Are you giving the food too quickly? Rapid distension of the stomach is a stimulus to vomit. Try going slower.

Is the food too cold? Try warming the food to body temperature (around 100° F). Use a thermometer in the warming water bath to be sure the temperature is where you want it.

If these two solutions do not work, the tube may have slipped too low inside the esophagus. If the tube is dipping into the stomach, the patient may vomit. The doctor can take an x-ray to see if this is the case and easily reposition the tube.

If none of these things seem to be happening, the patient’s primary disease may be progressing. Your veterinarian will need to evaluate your pet more comprehensively.
**Tube clogged?**

Clogging of the tube can be a challenge. First try to force 6 cc or so of tepid water through the tube by pushing. If the clog does not give way, try hooking up a syringe of 6 cc or so of water and alternately push and pull back creating a “toilet plunger” effect. Continue fairly rapid push-pull action until the tube is cleared.

Note: some people feel that incubating 6 cc of coca-cola in the tube overnight is helpful in dissolving a clog. Whether or not this works remains of some controversy but may be worth a try as the tube will be useless if it cannot be unlogged.

**Crusting or Pus at the tube exit site?**

The patient’s body does not like having a foreign body sticking out of it and some inflammation is frequently associated with the exit hole. True infection is unusual and most of the time simply cleaning the area with gauze or a moist tissue is sufficient to solve the problem.

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**HELPFUL LINKS**

This web site sells special E tube wraps for both dogs and cats which include a velcro strap to hold the tube out of the way. Additional tube care information is also provided.

[www.KittyKollar.com](http://www.kittykollar.com)

A Couple of Instructional Videos on Feeding with the E Tube:

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDclKxg_wk8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDclKxg_wk8)
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7NC1HehR-g8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7NC1HehR-g8)

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| Amount to feed your pet each feeding: | ________________ |
| Hours between feedings: | ________________ |
| How many times a day to feed: | ________________ |

Last revised: 7/3/2018

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[Mar Vista Animal Medical Center](http://www.marvistavet.com)