

## ENTERAL PUMPS AND SUPPLIES



**PURPOSE:** The word *enteral* means within or by the small intestine. Enteral feedings are a mode of feeding that directly delivers nutrients to the gastrointestinal (GI) tract. Flexible plastic feeding tubes are used to deliver the feeding nutrients to the GI tract. Electrically powered pumps can be used to control the rate of nutrient delivery.

**PUMPS:** There are many types and brands of feeding pumps and each model may have different features. Most feeding pumps use a rotary wave-like motion to regulate the delivery of nutrients to the patient. All feeding pumps have controls that can regulate the speed the nutrients are being delivered and can control the total amount to be delivered. Feeding pumps are prescription devices and the users of feeding pumps must always follow the specific operational and safety procedures in the manufacturer's operations manual. Each pump is usually attached to an accessory pole so the height of the formula and pump can be adjusted.

**FEEDING TUBES:** There are many methods to deliver nutrients directly to the GI tract, and each method has a different type feeding tube. There are short-term oral feeding tubes, intermediate term nasal feeding tubes, and long-term gastrostomy or duodenal tubes. Each feeding tube comes in different sizes and has been measured and fit for your use; any replacement tubes should be of the same size and type. Each kind of feeding tube has procedures used to verify proper placement of the tube, and proper cleaning and replacement intervals. Your home health company will discuss these with you.

**FEEDING SOLUTIONS:** Like feeding pumps and tubes, feeding solutions come in a wide range of solutions designed for specific patient needs. Your physician determines what nutrient formula is needed and performs calculations to determine daily needs. There are many feeding formulas that are similar and can cause adverse reactions if improperly used. Before using any feeding formula make sure it is of the same formula prescribed by the physician. Formulas come in different formulations, concentrations, and preparation styles, so please make sure you read the feeding formula containers carefully.

**PUMP ACCESSORIES:** Each feeding pump requires a collection device or container for holding the formula, tubing the pump uses to regulate formula delivery, and tubing that attaches to the feeding tube. These tube assemblies are usually provided in the form of a pump accessory kit and should be changed every 24 hours. This pump kit is a closed circuit and only the feeding formula should touch the insides of the units.

**USE:** The feeding pump is always setup by your medical equipment or home care company. The settings for the rate of formula delivery will be set by the delivery technician or home health nurse. There are specific instructions and safety precautions that must be followed when using a feeding pump. A home health nurse should provide you with the training you will need to control the feeding pump. Always wash your hands prior to handling the feeding pump, supplies and formulas. Never allow any liquid to spill on the feeding pump. If liquid spills on the feeding pump, immediately stop the flow of feeding formula to the patient, unplug the unit and clean up the liquid. After the unit has been cleaned the unit can be plugged back in and feeding resumed.

Once a container of feeding formula has been opened it is only good for 24 hours. Any unused formula should be covered and placed in the refrigerator. The date and time the container was opened should be written on the container and it should be discarded after 24 hours. Most feeding formulas can be stored at room temperature until they are opened, then they must be refrigerated. Unopened cans should be stored out of direct sunlight. Avoid extreme temperatures.

**SAFETY:** Your home health nursing staff will go over procedures with you for the safe use of the feeding pump, pump tubing, and specific feeding procedures. These safety procedures must be followed and become part of the feeding routine. Do not vary from the safety precautions and procedures provided by the home care nursing staff. Tube feeding is a relatively safe procedure and any complications can be avoided by following procedures. Professional nursing staff should be monitoring your feeding procedures and the patient's nutritional status on a regular basis.

**MAINTENANCE:** Feeding pumps should be clean and free from spills of feeding formula. A mild soap detergent can be used to wipe the exterior of the unit. Feeding pumps should only be serviced and repaired by your home medical equipment company. If you suspect your feeding pump has any problem, consult them immediately. Do not use the feeding pump until it has been evaluated.