

Esophagostomy Tube Feeding

An esophagostomy tube is a small, soft rubber tube that enters a surgical incision on the side of the neck into the esophagus and passes into the stomach. It allows you to syringe food into the stomach.

The tube can be used for pets that have developed anorexia for some reason or might be unable to eat, perhaps due to a broken jaw or disease in the oral cavity.

Feeding through the Tube

A special food is syringed through the tube two to four times per day. This food is formulated to meet the pet's nutritional needs; it should not cause vomiting or diarrhea. To feed your pet, follow these steps:

1. Stir the A/D or Maximum Calorie thoroughly to make it soft and runny enough to go through the syringe and tube. It should be at room temperature when fed.
2. Remove the cap from the feeding tube.
3. Using the syringe provided, inject the amount of food directed by your veterinarian. It is helpful to inject the food slowly, about 3 cc per second. The amount might vary day to day so be sure to pay close attention to the instructions for your individual pet.
4. When the food has been injected, inject 5 cc of tap water through the tube so food does not remain in it; replace the cap on the tube.
5. Any remaining food should be stored in the refrigerator. Before the next feeding, it should be warmed to body temperature under hot tap water or in a microwave oven. If you heat it in a microwave oven, be sure to thoroughly mix the contents prior to feeding because of uneven heating. Also, always check the temperature prior to feeding to be sure that the food is not too hot.

Removing the Tube

Patience and persistence are essential. Some pets require several weeks of tube feeding before their appetite will return, depending on the disease being treated. At least twice daily, offer your pet a small amount of a favorite food so that you will know when its appetite is improving. The esophagostomy tube will not hinder chewing or swallowing. After your pet has been eating well on its own for 3-4 days, it should be returned to the hospital for tube removal. Removal of the tube is simple and does not require anesthesia; however, you should not attempt to remove the tube yourself.