

This brochure provides basic information about NG tubes, as well as answers to some of the questions you may have.



Zion, 17 months



The Children's Hospital *of* Philadelphia®

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Growing stronger with CHD

How an NG Tube Can Help



Maya, 3 months



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For babies, eating by mouth is much like an exercise workout, and babies with congenital heart disease (CHD) may get tired more quickly. Many babies with CHD will need an NG tube (sometimes called a “feeding tube”) to help them get the nutrition and calories they need to grow.

What is an NG tube?

“NG tube” is short for naso-gastric tube. An NG tube is a temporary and safe way to give your baby breast milk or formula directly into her stomach.

Why might my baby need an NG tube?

Your baby will need to get a certain amount of milk every day to gain weight and develop normally. At times, babies with congenital heart disease (CHD) have to use much of their energy just to breathe, swallow and eat. This can make it much more difficult for them to grow. With an NG tube, they won't have to use nearly as much energy to eat, so they'll be able to grow and get stronger!

In addition, babies who have had heart surgery need time to recover from the surgery. They might not be able to eat as well during this recovery period, even if they were eating well before surgery. Some of these babies will need an NG tube.

Can my baby still eat by mouth?

Don't worry! While your baby is getting NG tube feedings, you can continue to help him practice oral feeding. You may work closely with a speech pathologist, who is specially trained to help your baby learn to eat safely and comfortably by mouth. However, in some cases, it may not be safe for your baby to have oral feeds.



If your baby needs an NG tube, he will need the tube until he can take all of the necessary breast milk or formula by mouth.

Can I put my breast milk in my baby's NG tube?

Yes! In fact, it is beneficial for your baby to receive your pumped breast milk in her NG tube. You can also still breastfeed your baby while she has an NG tube. It is not necessary to use the bottle if this is your preference.

Will my baby go home with an NG tube?

Many babies continue to need NG tube feedings at home. If your baby is not ready to take all of his milk by mouth before leaving the Hospital, using an NG tube at home will help to ensure he gets all of the nutrients he needs to grow. Before you are discharged from the Hospital, your baby's nurse will make sure you receive training and get to practice using the NG tube. At home, you can continue to feed your baby by mouth, and anything your baby does not take from the breast or bottle can be offered through the NG tube.

It is normal to feel nervous about going home with an NG tube. Because growth and nutrition are crucial for babies

with CHD, having the NG tube can reduce the worry about your baby not getting adequate nutrition. Having an NG tube may make practicing oral feeding (with breastfeeding or a bottle) less stressful for you and your baby.

Whom can I contact if I need help or have more questions?

We understand that you may be nervous, anxious or worried, and we're here to help make your experience as smooth as possible. The following providers are available to support you:

- Registered nurses
- Physicians
- Registered dietitians
- Lactation consultants
- Speech therapists
- Nurse practitioners
- Clinical nurse specialists

If you have questions, please ask your child's nurse or care provider. We're always happy to help!