

## HEALTH & SAFETY: ASPIRATION PREVENTION

### “Choice Considerations Relevant to the Use of Enteral Nutrition”

*BQIS/Outreach Fact Sheets provide a general overview on topics important to supporting an individual’s health and safety and to improving their quality of life. This document provides general information on the topic and is not intended to replace team assessment, decision making or medical advice. This is the tenth of ten Fact Sheets regarding Aspiration Prevention.*

#### Objectives

Interdisciplinary teams, families, and individuals will gain a better understanding of issues that revolve around the decision to replace oral intake with enteral nutrition.

#### Definitions

**Enteral Nutrition:** A way to provide nutrition and hydration instead of food through a tube placed in the nose, the stomach, or the small intestine.

#### Facts

- Making an Individualized Decision Regarding Enteral Nutrition:
  - Choosing enteral nutrition over oral intake is an individual issue that must be carefully considered and discussed by the individual, their family, guardian, medical team and other members of the interdisciplinary team.
  - Consideration must be given to the individual’s/guardian’s wishes.
  - In order to make a decision, everyone involved needs a clear understanding of all the facts surrounding the individual situation, the risks and benefits of all alternatives, and both short and long term implications of each alternative.
  - Health and medical-related questions specific to the person can best be addressed by the person’s physician.
- Benefits of tube feedings may be an improved or steady:
  - Physical health (improved weight, hydration and nutrition, stronger and healthier skin, muscle and bone, maintain chemical balance).
  - Mental health (more alert and energized).

- Quality of life (more alert and energized , increased socialization, and an increased feeling of well being).

*Note: This list of benefits is not intended to be all-inclusive.*

- Possible risks of tube feedings may include:

- Choking/aspirating on fluids
- Cramps and diarrhea
- Irritation and infection from the tube
- Being seen by others as sick or fragile
- Tube migrating from where it was inserted
- Chemical imbalances in blood, i.e., electrolytes
- Hydration concerns, either too little free water and fluid causing dehydration, or too much free water and fluid causing over-hydration
- Certain conditions may worsen without close monitoring, such as congestive heart failure or diabetes mellitus.

*Note: This list of risks is not intended to be all-inclusive.*

## Recommended Actions and Prevention Strategies

1. Consult primary physician along with the rest of the interdisciplinary team with any questions and concerns.
2. Give careful consideration to all options, benefits and risks.
3. Be supportive of the individual and/or the guardian in their decision.

## Learning Assessment

Questions that can be used to verify a person's competency in the material contained in this Fact Sheet:

1. Who might best address health concerns related to making a decision on oral intake verses enteral intake?
  - A. The guardian
  - B. The physician
  - C. The interdisciplinary team
  - D. The dietitian
2. Receiving nutrition through a tube could improve a person's:
  - A. Physical Health
  - B. Mental Health
  - C. Quality of Life
  - D. All of the Above
3. Possible risks of receiving nutrition through a tube could include:
  - A. Choking on fluids
  - B. Tube moving from where it was inserted
  - C. Development of seizures
  - D. All of the above
  - E. A and B

## References

Enteral and Parenteral Nutrition Support. Modified and adapted from Gorman RC, Morris JB: Minimally invasive access to the gastrointestinal tract. In Rombeau JL, Rolandelli RH, editors: *Clinical nutrition: enteral and tube feeding*, p 174, Philadelphia, 1997, WB Saunders; and Ali A et al: Nutritional support services, *Nutritional Support Algorithms*, 8(7):13, July 1998. [www.uwgb.edu/laceyk/NutSci486/Chapter23.ppt](http://www.uwgb.edu/laceyk/NutSci486/Chapter23.ppt)

## Related Resources

Aspiration Prevention Series Fact Sheets: “Food Texture and Fluid Consistency Modification”, “Management of Constipation”, “Management of Oral Health”, “Dysphagia”, “Modified Barium Swallow Study/ Videofluoroscopy”, “Management of Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)”, “Positioning”, “Management of Residuals”, and “Feeding Tubes and Feeding/Medication Administration Options”

“General Description of Diet Textures” Handout

## Learning Assessment Answers

1. B
2. D
3. E

## Outreach Services

[outreach@fssa.in.gov](mailto:outreach@fssa.in.gov) • [DDRSOutreach.IN.gov](http://DDRSOutreach.IN.gov)

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