

Help with this leaflet:



If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or

patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk



We are currently working towards a smoke free site. Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking areas.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169

Cambridge University Hospitals 
NHS Foundation Trust

Clinical Nutrition

Patient Information

Looking after your Pexact tube A guide for head and neck patients

Document history

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What is a PEXACT?

A Pexact is a soft balloon retained gastrostomy tube placed through your skin into your stomach to allow feed to enter directly.

Balloon Retained – there is a small balloon on the end which when inflated holds the tube in place inside the stomach.

Gastrostomy – opening to the stomach.

There are two stitches close to the tube to help secure its position. These will be removed after about 4 weeks by the Nutrition Nurse Specialists

The big port is where your food and water must go down to enter your stomach, there is a choice of two ends.

The small coloured port is for inflating the balloon.

The tube is prevented from sliding too far into the stomach by another bumper on the outside.

The tube is prevented from falling out because of the balloon inflated in your stomach.



- leaks of fluid around the tube
- pain on feeding or flushing your tube
- new bleeding

If you have any of the above signs **stop** feeding immediately and telephone

Monday to Friday 08:30-16:00 - Nutrition Nurse Specialists
01223 216037

Out of hours – Please contact your GP.
If you cannot wait to be seen by your GP, please contact your local hospital's emergency department.

Can the tube fall out?

It is possible for the tube to fall out if the balloon bursts or the stitches come loose and fall away. It is very important that it is replaced within an hour and a half or the hole in your stomach may close up.

You will be sent a spare tube, it is important to keep this with you at all times.

If your tube falls out, please contact either your Company Nurse or the Nutrition Nurse Specialists immediately within the hours of:

08:30-16:00 Monday to Friday **01223 216037**

If it is outside of working hours, please go to your local Emergency Department (A&E) with your spare tube. There are instructions inside the packet. If you are an Addenbrooke's patient please contact ward N2 ext 56002 for advice.

What else do I need to look out for?

You need to look at your site regularly to check for signs of infection. The things to look out for are:

- redness
- pain
- discharge which is yellow and smells

If you notice these signs contact GP, your Company Nurse or the Nutrition Nurse Specialists.

It is also possible for the skin at the exit site to become pink and/or lumpy and it may bleed easily. This may be an overgrowth of tissue which can be easily treated with a special dressing or ointment. Contact your GP, Company Nurse or the Nutrition Nurse Specialists if you are worried.

Why do I have a Pexact?

You have had this tube placed before you start your chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy. Your swallow may get worse during your treatment and because of this a Pexact provides a safe route to provide the nutrients you need to help you stay healthy.

How long do I need to have my Pexact?

You will need to keep your Pexact for the first few weeks of your treatment.

After approximately four weeks your Pexact will need changing to another similar tube. This will be done by the Nutrition Nurse Specialists. We will arrange this to fit in with your treatment and clinic appointments.

After the first change, it doesn't need to be changed for another three months. This can be done at home by the Company Nurse.

You will be reviewed regularly by a Dietitian. They will advise how long you need the tube for and when you can eat and drink normally again.

If you no longer need the tube it can easily be removed by the Nutrition Nurse Specialists or your Company Nurse.

How do I clean my Pexact and the skin around it?

For the first week:

- Remove the dressing the day after your tube is inserted. This is no longer required.
- Clean the tube and site daily.
- Use the gauze swabs provided. Carefully clean under the outside bumper using the Octenisan body wash diluted in warm water. Dry well. Apply the Bactroban ointment around where the tube exits the skin.

After the first week:

- It is no longer necessary to use the Octenisan and Bactroban. Still clean daily with warm soapy water.
- If there are no stitches attached to the bumper you can slide the outside bumper along the tube to make cleaning the site easier. Make sure you replace the bumper approximately 2mm from the skin so that the tube does not slide in and out.
- Do not forget to clean the back of the bumper.

Can I have a bath?

For the first two days after your tube is placed do not have a bath or shower. Wash using the Octenisan body wash.

For the rest of the first week you may have a shallow bath or a brief shower using the Octenisan body wash. Do not get the tube and exit site wet.

After the first week, if the skin around your site is clean and dry you may return to your normal bathing routine. If you have any concerns please contact either your Company Nurse or the Nutrition Nurse Specialists.

How does the balloon stay inflated?

Once a week you need to check that the balloon is still full of water. To do this:

- Fill a 5ml syringe with 3ml of cooled boiled water
- Have another empty 5ml syringe ready
- Use the empty syringe to draw the water out of the balloon.
- Swap syringes and inflate the balloon with the new water

If you find the amount of water you draw out of the balloon is less than 1.5ml this could be a sign that the balloon is not working properly. Please contact your Company Nurse or the Nutrition Nurse Specialists for advice.