



Breastfeeding Committee For  
Saskatchewan

# Breastfeeding Finger-Feeding Your Baby with a Feeding Tube

## IMPORTANT

- Finger-feeding with a feeding tube is only a **temporary** way to feed a baby.
- At home, check feeding tube before each use. Tubes become stiff and should be thrown out after 1 week of use.
- There are professional devices available-check with your local pharmacy

*The first milk choice is your own expressed breast milk. If artificial baby milk (formula) is used discuss the possible health risks with your health care provider.*

For further information contact:

*Local Public Health Nurse*

*Lactation Consultant*

*Local Health Care  
Provider*

*Local breastfeeding support  
group*

**HealthLine**  
**1-877-800-0002**

This method of feeding should be used only **after** instruction by a qualified caregiver.

## A feeding tube is used:

- as a method of feeding when a mother is not able to breastfeed her baby.
- to teach baby a better tongue position used for breastfeeding.

## Getting Ready

- Make sure your nails are short and clean, especially on the finger you will use to finger-feed.
- Wash your hands.
- Gather the supplies:
  - expressed breast milk or formula warmed to room temperature
  - 15" #5 French feeding tube (there are other lengths and sizes available if needed)
  - 12 mL syringe (there are other sizes available if needed)
  - bowl with warm soapy water
  - syringe to clean tube
  - tape
- Place supplies on a clean cloth.

## Using the Feeding Tube

- Hold the tip of the 12 mL syringe in the milk.
- Pull back on the plunger to fill the syringe with milk.
- Attach the syringe to the large end of the feeding tube.
- Push the syringe plunger until air is pushed out of the feeding tube and milk fills the tube.
- Tape or hold the end of the feeding tube onto the pad of your finger, even with your fingertip.



## Feeding your Baby

- Hold your baby in your arms, upright, in a semi-sitting position on your lap, or in an infant chair.
- Use a finger closest to the size of your nipple. Touch baby's lip with your taped finger to encourage baby to open mouth wide like a yawn.
- Slide your finger into baby's mouth, resting the nail bed on the baby's tongue. The pad of your finger should rest where the hard and soft palate join the roof of the mouth, about 4 cm (1 1/2") into the baby's mouth. Gently massage the roof of baby's mouth to start baby sucking. You may also try gently tickling the baby's feet/hands .
- After baby sucks 3 to 4 times, press gently on the syringe plunger. When baby stops sucking stop pressing the plunger. **Do not** press the plunger faster than baby can easily suck and swallow. **Do not** press hard if the syringe sticks. This may force too much milk into the baby's mouth and he/she may choke.
- Burp the baby after each syringe of milk.
- Record the time your baby was fed and the amount taken.

## Cleaning the Feeding Tube

### In the Hospital:

- Use a clean feeding tube and syringe each time.

### At Home:

- Take the syringe apart.
- Wash (**do not boil**) the tube and syringe with hot, soapy water (mild liquid hand soap).
- Use another syringe with hot water to rinse the inside of the tube by attaching the tube to syringe and push hot water through the tube.
- Push air through the tube with syringe and hang to dry.
- Rinse syringe well and place on a clean dry cloth and allow to air dry.
- Store the tube and syringe in a clean container.
- Keep out to reach of small children.

**Stay in touch with your appropriate health care provider if you are finger-feeding with a feeding tube.**