

Key Role of the Nurse in Enteral Nutrition Delivery



Enteral nutrition (EN), commonly known as tube feeding, is a vital component of nutrition therapy for those who cannot maintain adequate nutrition by oral intake alone. EN is an important nutrition therapy for many patients in the hospital, long-term care, and at home.

There were 2.4 million adult hospitalized patients diagnosed with malnutrition in 2018 in the U.S. Less than 5% of those patients received EN, thus 95% of those patients may have benefitted from EN therapy. Malnutrition has a significant impact on patient outcomes.

Nurse's Role

- Nurses play a critical role in tube feeding delivery along with complication prevention and treatment. However, nurses may be uncomfortable or frustrated with EN procedures, may not have had a tube-fed patient in a while, and may want to review the nursing protocols in order to manage this therapy.
- Nurses need to use best practices to provide high-quality care and feel comfortable in their knowledge of EN procedures.
- This practice tool is to inform staff nurses, advanced practice nurses, and nurse educators about using evidence based EN protocols. The overall goal is to improve nurses' knowledge and confidence in providing best practices for EN in order to optimize patient safety and improve outcomes.
- Nurses can optimize care by using interdisciplinary team partnerships including RN-RD, RN-RPh, and RN-Provider communication.

Key Message: Access Your Hospital/ Agency EN Protocols

- It is important to know and follow your institution's EN protocols.
- Your EN procedures may be housed on your hospital intranet or agency protocols/procedure manuals.
- Many institutions ask you to review them during orientation, and perhaps on an annual basis.
- If you are unsure of the EN protocols, ask your nurse educator, nurse manager, or advanced practice nurse about how to access these important protocols/procedures when you need them so you are prepared for your next patient.

EN Resources for Nurses

The following videos can be found at nutritioncare.org/ENresources.

1. Elevating the Nurse's Role in the Optimization of Enteral Nutrition (EN) for Improved Patient Outcomes
2. Interprofessional Collaboration in Enteral Nutrition Delivery

ASPEN also has these publications on EN.

- When is enteral nutrition indicated?
JPEN 2022;46(7):1470-1496.
- Safe Practices for Enteral Nutrition Therapy
JPEN 2017;41(1):15-103.
- Development of a Competency Model for Placement and Verification of Nasogastric and Nasoenteric Feeding Tubes for Adult Hospitalized Patients
NCP 2021;36(3):517-533.
- Preparing and Administering Medications
stayconnected.org/medication-administration-poster/
- ASPEN Nursing Standards
NCP 2016;31(4):527-547.
- Malnutrition diagnoses and associated outcomes in hospitalized patients: United States, 2018
NCP 2021;36(5):957-969.

ASPEN nurses help write and review Elsevier Nursing Skills. No matter what practice guidelines you have at your institution, be sure to use evidenced-based protocols, follow the literature, and check that your institution is using best practices.

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