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Details Last Updated: 07 October 2017 Administering medication via an enteral feeding tube requires thought and exercise of clinical judgement. Most medicines are not licensed for administration via enteral feeding tubes and professionals responsible for prescribing, supplying and administering them accept liability for their use Initial Considerations Is medication essential? Can an alternative route be used? eg. topical, sublingual, rectal, IV Is there a more suitable formulation within the same therapeutic class? Is the oral route available for medicines administration? What is the size and site of feeding tube? eg. NG, NJ, PEG Medicine Formulations Formulation Advantages Disadvantages Liquid solution Easy to measure Accurate dosing Ready to use Recipients can cause diarrhoea eg. sorbitol Multiple bottles may be required Hypersmolar medicines can have GI side effects Bioavailability can differ between liquid and tablet formulations eg. digoxin Liquid suspension (insoluble drug in a suspending agent) Easy to measure Ready to use Large granule size can block tubes Unlicensed 'specials' can be expensive Need adequate mixing to ensure accurate dosing Soluble tablets (dissolve in water) Drug is in solution Accurate dosing Generally inexpensive Convenient Some drugs can take time to dissolve Dispersible tablets (disintegrate in water) Accurate dosing Generally inexpensive Convenient Drug particles may block tube Effervescent tablets (disintegrate and fizz in water) Accurate dosing Convenient Sodium content can be high May require large volume of water Some drugs can take time to disperse Opening capsules Convenient Relatively inexpensive Contents may not disperse in water Occupational exposure eg. antibiotics Can be difficult to open In general the preferred formulations are liquid solutions and soluble tablets. Crushing tablets and opening capsules should be considered as a last resort due to inaccuracies in dosing, length of time for preparation and risk of occupational exposure. If unsure, a pharmacist or local medicines information department should be contacted. Medicines that should NEVER be crushed include: Modified/extended release tablets Enteric coated tablets Cytoxotics Hormones Please note that most orodispersible tablets eg. lansoprazole fastabs, loperamide melts, are NOT suitable for sublingual administration. Nasojejunal tubes NJ tubes have greater potential to block due to longer length and smaller lumen. Some medicines are unsuitable for NJ administration as this bypasses gastric and duodenal absorption. Hypersmolar medicines can cause GI side effects as the diluting effect of the stomach is bypassed. Advice from a pharmacist should always be taken before medication is administered via an NJ tube. Drug and feed interactions Some medicines interact with enteral feeds causing a reduction in drug or feed absorption or a tube blockage. This can be avoided by using once daily dosing if possible, changing to an alternative medicine and/or administering medicines during a break in feeding. A pharmacist should always be consulted before administering medicines and feed via an enteral feeding tube. Some examples of drug interactions include: Medicina Effect of interaction Solutions Phenyltoin Reduced absorption Sub-therapeutic levels Give intravenously Stop feed 2hrs before administration Give once daily if possible Monitor plasma levels Warfarin Reduced absorption and effect dependent on vit K content of feed Monitor INR and adjust dose Give s/c LMWH Flucloxacillin Reduced absorption as best absorbed on an empty stomach Give intravenously Change to alternative antibiotic Sucralfate Reduced effect as binds to feed GI obstruction Stop feed 1hr before administration and restart 1hr after Practical considerations Flush tube with 30ml water at beginning and end of medicines administration (unless fluid restricted) Flush tube with 10ml water between each individual medicine Use largest practical enteral syringe to avoid tube damage Do not mix medicines for enteral tube administration Prescribe for appropriate route on drug chart eg. NC, NJ, PEG and not PO References NHS Greater Glasgow + Clyde Nutrition Resource Manual; Section 5, part 3. British National Formulary 72, September 2016. NMC, Standards for medicines management, London: Nursing and Midwifery Council 2009. White R & Bradnam V. Handbook of Drug Administration Via Enteral Feeding Tubes - 3rd Ed. Pharmaceutical press. 2015. Williams N. Medication administration through enteral feeding tubes. Am J Health Syst Pharm. 2008;65:2347-2357. Further information available here Thanks are due to many healthcare professionals who provided copy for this area of the BAPEN website. Among them from PENG are... Annelie Shaw Katrina Wood Caroline Goodger Kallum Rhule Sean White And from BPNG are... Graeme Doherty Rebecca White With thanks also to the PENG committee of 2016 who reviewed content. Enteral feeding tubes are increasingly used to administer medications in the acute care, community care, and long-term care settings for patients receiving nutritional support. Medication administration through a feeding tube can present a number of challenges, including obstruction of the access device as well as the risk of decreased bioavailability of the medication due to interactions or delivery beyond the appropriate segment of the gastrointestinal tract. In addition, this form of administration is frequently outside of product labeling. Although a number of articles have been published on the challenges of medication administration through enteral feeding tubes, 1-4 health professionals have been lacking a comprehensive resource to guide their clinical decision making. The authors of the Handbook of Drug Administration via Enteral Feeding Tubes achieve their aim of supporting healthcare professionals in the safe and effective prescribing of drugs via enteral feeding tubes. This handbook was developed on behalf of the British Pharmaceutical Nutrition Group (BPNG). The first 10 brief chapters provide background knowledge on the legal, practical and technical aspects of administering medications via an enteral feeding tube. Topics covered include the key responsibilities of pharmacists; the different types, sizes, and positions for feeding tubes; the importance of tube patency; techniques for flushing, restoring, and maintaining tube patency; and the advantages and disadvantages for each medication formulation. There is a chapter on the types of syringes and ports highlighting options that are suitable or unsafe, and descriptions of different mechanisms for drug interactions when an enteral tube is used for medication administration. The legal, professional, safety, health, and risk-management implications of altering a drug's formulation and administration via an unlicensed route are summarized. The remainder of the book consists of 344 individual A to Z monographs containing guidance on the safe administration of specific medications. For each drug, product/administration information is listed with the site of absorption after oral administration, interactions, health and safety data, alternative routes, recommendations, and step-by-step instructions for intragastric and intrajejunal administration if these options exist. Recommendations are referenced with published literature, manufacturers' studies, and product material, as well as research conducted by the BPNG. Readers need to be aware that there are some differences in the brand names as well as formulations and strengths available in the United Kingdom compared to the United States (such as paracetamol [acetaminophen] infusion and zinc sulphate effervescent tablets). There are no other publications that provide a comprehensive reference for commonly used medications on dosage forms suitable for administration through an enteral feeding tube and the optimal technique to do so. Tertiary drug references contain some of the more basic information but typically lack data on the site of absorption or administration of medications by the intragastric or intrajejunal route. The Handbook of Food-Drug Interactions addresses the issue of medication administration through enteral feeding tubes as part of a 21-page chapter on drug interactions and enteral support, and Hospital Pharmacy has a periodic feature and a wall chart on oral medications that should not be crushed, but the Handbook of Drug Administration via Enteral Feeding Tubes stands in a class by itself. 5-7 Written by experts in nutrition practice, with contributions from the pharmaceutical industry, this text has special relevance for the clinical practitioner making patient care decisions. The extensive references and evidence-based approach to decision making are an appealing feature. It will be an essential reference for drug information centers, medical libraries, and pharmacy departments, as well as a resource for health professionals caring for patients with enteral feeding tubes. 1. Beckwith MC, Feddema SS, Barton RG, et al. A guide to drug therapy in patients with enteral feeding tubes: dosage form selection and administration methods. Hospital Pharmacy. 2004;39(3):225-37. [PubMed] [Google Scholar] 2. Dharmarajan TS, Unnikrishnan D. Tube feeding in the elderly: the technique, complications and outcome. Postgrad Med. 2004;115(2):51-61. [PubMed] [Google Scholar] 3. Engle KK, Hannawa TE. Techniques for administering oral medications to critical care patients receiving continuous enteral nutrition. Am J Health-Sys Pharm. 1999;56(14):1441-4. [PubMed] [Google Scholar] 4. Magnuson BL, Clifford TM, Hoskins LA, et al. Enteral nutrition and drug administration, interactions, and complications. Nutr Clin Pract. 2005;20(6):618-24. [PubMed] [Google Scholar] 5. Frankel EH, Wolfe JJ, McCabe BJ, editors. Handbook of Food-Drug Interactions. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press; 2003. [PubMed] [Google Scholar] 6. Mitchell JF. Oral dosage forms that should not be crushed or chewed. Hosp Pharm. 2002;37(2):213-4. [PubMed] [Google Scholar] 7. Oral dosage forms that should not be crushed or chewed (wall chart) Hosp Pharm. 2007;42(6) supplement [PubMed] [Google Scholar]

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