

Guidance: How to unblock an enteral tube

Step 1:

- Massage length of tube between thumb and forefinger.
- Use push/pull action with syringe
- DO NOT USE EXCESSIVE FORCE
- Flush with warm water using push pause technique
- If debris is pulled into syringe, discard and refill with fresh water

Step 2

- If the blockage is visible soak the whole tube in warm water, massaging the blockage between thumb and forefinger
- Then repeat step 1

Step 3:

- If tube remains blocked then instill carbonated water and close end connector. Leave in tube for 60 minutes, then flush again with warm water

Step 4:

- If tube remains blocked Senior nurse to Dissolve the contents of 4 x 500mg sodium bicarbonate capsules* in 30ml warm water.
- Using a 60ml syringe instill into tube and leave for a minimum of 2 hours, longer if possible

*Sodium bicarbonate capsules are available in the Gastrostomy Emergency Box in the point of care clinical room

Step 5:

- Repeat steps 1-4. If tube remains blocked after 2 attempts, contact Enteral Team or CRS.
- Report incident via Datix & review cause of blockage. Implement preventative measures to stop reoccurrence