

### **What is a “PEG”?**

A PEG is a feeding tube that goes into the stomach directly through the abdominal wall. It involves having an endoscopy (the insertion of a flexible tube via the mouth into the stomach) and a small cut on the skin over the abdomen. It is a simple and safe way of receiving food when there are problems with swallowing or eating. A PEG can be temporary or permanent and is used in adults and children.

### **Special considerations**

Aspirin and anti-inflammatory drugs (arthritis tablets) should be stopped at least one week prior to the procedure.

If you are diabetic, have heart valve disease or have a pacemaker implanted, or are taking blood-thinning tablets (such as Warfarin), it is important to discuss this with your doctor beforehand since special arrangements may be necessary or special precautions may need to be taken.

### **How is a PEG put in?**

You need to fast (that is nothing to eat or drink) for 6 hours before the procedure. You may be given some antibiotics to reduce the risk of infection. Please tell your doctor if you are allergic to any particular antibiotic.

### **Will I be given sedation?**

Yes. You are given sedation by injection into a vein to make you more comfortable.

Your throat may or may not be sprayed with a local anaesthetic.

A mouth guard is placed between your teeth so that you do not accidentally bite the endoscope. Oxygen will also be given via the mouth guard.

With you lying comfortably, the endoscope is passed via the mouth into the stomach. This instrument allows inspection of the stomach. The correct place to put the tube is found and local anaesthetic is injected into the skin. A small cut (about 1 cm) is made in the skin and a small needle then inserted into the stomach. Your doctor then positions the PEG tube (a small, flexible, hollow tube) and the endoscope is removed.

Insertion of a PEG tube usually takes between 20 and 40 minutes to complete.

### **What happens after the PEG is inserted?**

Following the procedure, you will remain in the hospital recovery area for up to 3 hours, until the effects of medication wear off.

Your doctor may want you to stay in hospital overnight or let you go home. This decision will depend upon why the PEG is being inserted and how sick you are. If you go home, you must NOT drive a car, travel on public transport alone, operate machinery, sign legal documents or drink alcohol on the same day after the test. It is strongly advised that a friend or relative take you home and stay with you overnight.

Your throat may be slightly sore for a day or so after the procedure. You may feel a bit bloated, due to the air, which has been injected through the endoscope, but this will quickly settle. The cut where the tube is inserted may be painful for a short time, but this can be managed with medications like panadol. The wound will heal in 5 to 7 days.

Feeds using the tube usually start with clear liquids between 4 hours and 24 hours after the procedure. Your doctor will give detailed instructions on this and you will receive more information on how to look after the tube and give the feeds from a dietician and a nurse.

**IT IS A SIMPLE  
and safe way of  
receiving food when  
there are problems  
with swallowing  
or eating.**

### **Are there any risks?**

Yes. The insertion of a PEG tube is a safe procedure but complications can occur. The likelihood of complications depends upon how sick you are.

Please feel free to ask your doctor for further information.

Minor complications occur in 1 to 2 out of every 10 people. The most common is infection in the wound, which usually responds to simple antibiotics. Uncommon events include leakage around the tube, nausea and vomiting for a few days, or bleeding from the wound.

Some complications are serious and may be life threatening. These include a severe infection of the abdominal wall, or damage to the oesophagus (food pipe) or stomach or bowel (such as perforation) at the time of the examination. These complications are rare but may require urgent treatment and even an operation.

Problems may occur with the PEG tube over weeks or months including blockage or accidental removal of the PEG tube or aspiration (inhalation) of the feed into the lungs

### **How long does a PEG tube last?**

PEG tubes can block or deteriorate, but they usually have a long life (many months). Eventually, the tube will need to be replaced. This is a simple process, but sometimes requires an endoscopy to do it. Discuss this with your doctor.

Your doctor will let you know where to get advice quickly if your worried about feeds or the tube.

Adults and children can be fed through PEG's indefinitely. You are welcome to share any concerns you have with your doctor, now or in the future.

The Digestive Health Foundation (DHF) is committed to promoting better health for all Australians through education and community health programs related to the digestive system. The DHF is the educational arm of the Gastroenterological Society of Australia (GESA). GESA is the professional body representing the specialty of gastrointestinal and liver disease. Members of the Society are drawn from physicians, surgeons, scientists and other medical specialties with an interest in gastrointestinal disorders. GI disorders are among the most common health related problems affecting the community.

Research and education into gastrointestinal disease are essential to improve the health of all Australians.

Further information on a wide variety of gastrointestinal conditions is available on our website..

**Digestive Health Foundation**

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*This brochure is promoted as a public service by the Digestive Health Foundation. This leaflet cannot be completely comprehensive and is intended as a guide only. The information given here is current at the time of printing, but may change in the future. If you have further questions you should raise them with your own doctor.*

## PERCUTANEOUS ENDOSCOPIC GASTROSTOMY

### FACTS ABOUT PEGs



PEGS



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