Supporting Safe Home Enteral Tube Feeding:
Checklists for Patients and Carers, Healthcare Professionals and Homecare Providers

Introduction

Home enteral tube feeding (HETF) is a life-sustaining form of treatment used when people cannot meet their nutrition and hydration needs safely and effectively by mouth. **Getting this care right is crucial:** NICE quality standards emphasise the importance of proper training, monitoring, and regular review for people managing artificial nutrition support at home, ensuring safety, wellbeing, and early recognition of complications.

The NHS 10 Year Health Plan for England sets a clear ambition to shift the health system from treating sickness to preventing ill health, supported by a modernised, community-focused, and digitally enabled model of care. This strategic direction emphasises **earlier intervention, personalised care, and better management of long term conditions** by embedding prevention and holistic wellbeing into everyday clinical practice. These principles should apply to all home nations in the UK.

A patient and healthcare service checklist can be **a powerful tool for driving high quality care in home enteral tube feeding.** By clearly outlining **what good care should look like,** a checklist helps patients and carers, and professionals stay aligned on essential safety steps, nutritional goals, and care planning. It supports patients to feel confident and informed, ensuring they know how to manage equipment, recognise early signs of problems, and understand when and how to seek help.

For health and homecare services, a checklist acts as **a consistent framework that promotes good practice,** reduces variation, and ensures key processes - such as care planning, communication, and scheduled reviews - are not missed. It strengthens continuity across community, primary, and acute care settings, helping the NHS deliver **safe, person centred care.**

From feedback to action

These checklists have been developed in response to feedback from patients about their home enteral nutrition journey and experiences, as published in 'Experiences and views of support services for people living at home with an enteral tube: It's time to listen and take action.'* They are designed to empower patients and carers to advocate for comprehensive, coordinated, and compassionate care at home, while supporting shared decision-making, reducing avoidable complications or harm, and helping to ensure that home enteral feeding is delivered safely, effectively, and in a way that protects patient dignity and independence.

*Further information can be found here: https://bit.ly/PNGHETF

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Checklist for a Patient and/or Carer Home Enteral Tube Feeding

What to expect from your NHS healthcare team

1 Assessment & Planning for your nutrition and hydration plan

- **Personalised Care Plan:** You should expect a tailored plan developed with you (and/or your carer), covering feed type, delivery method, timing, nutritional goals, and how to administer medications via your tube (if relevant).
- **Initial Contact:** A member of your NHS healthcare team should contact you within 1-2 working days of discharge home, or initiation of home enteral tube feeding.

2 Training & Education – so you feel in control and know what to do and who to contact

- **Comprehensive Training:** You should receive thorough initial and ongoing training on tube management, feeding, how to give any medications, and troubleshooting for you and your carers.
- **Written Information:** Provided at the time of tube insertion or before discharge including:
  - Tube type and function
  - Feeding plan (including medications and timing of flushes)
  - Troubleshooting and dealing with any problems with your tube
  - Stoma (hole in the skin) management
  - Contact details for support services
- **Accessible Formats:** Information should be available in various formats; leaflets, online, images/diagrams, including 'easy-read' formats.

3 Coordination of Care

- **Multidisciplinary Team:** Your care should be coordinated by a nutrition team including dietitians, nurses, and other professionals to monitor and review your care plan.
- **Seamless Transition:** You should be provided with seamless transition from hospital to home, including provision of necessary supplies and contact details for support services.

4 Monitoring & Support

- **Regular Reviews:** You should have ongoing monitoring and review of your feeding regimen, tube, and lifestyle needs.
- **Support Services:** You should have access to:
  - Out-of-hours/24-hour support line (provided by the homecare company)
  - Homecare delivery for supplies
  - Follow-up assessment and review from an appropriate healthcare professional
  - List of contact details for emergencies and wellbeing support

Checklist for a Patient and/or Carer Home Enteral Tube Feeding

What to expect from your NHS healthcare team

5 Guidelines & Standards

- **National Guidance:** Adherence to NICE guidance and local infection prevention protocols.
- **Infection Prevention:** Clear instructions on minimising infection risk (feed, flushing, stoma care).
- **Quality Standards for Nutrition Support in Adults –** Promises made to you. https://bit.ly/BAPENQS

6 Person-Centred Care

- **Quality of Life:** Your feeding regimen should fit your daily routine and minimise life disruption.
- **Emotional Support:** Access to health and wellbeing support and advice as needed.
- **Providing timely feedback:** You should be able to provide feedback on services and care received.

7 Carer Support

- **Carer Information:** Guidance for carers on managing tube care, supporting someone who needs to have nutrition and hydration via a feeding tube and their own wellbeing.
- **Advocacy:** Support for carers to act as advocates and access peer support.

8 Patient Support Groups

- **Peer Support:** Information about groups like PINNT, local and online communities, and social media resources.

9 Additional Expectations (where appropriate)

- **Emergency Planning:** Clear guidance and contacts for tube-related emergencies.
- **Problem Solving:** Flowcharts or documents for common issues, and a replacement kit (spare tube, plugs, tape, pH strips, lubricant).
- **Emotional Adjustment:** Compassionate support for the psychological impact of tube feeding.
- **Consistency:** Consistent advice and information from all healthcare professionals.

Do not be afraid to ask about any aspects of your homecare. It is important to have open communication and talk to your healthcare team if you are not sure if you have everything you need. If you feel any of these areas are lacking, you should raise them with your healthcare team or support services.

Checklist for Healthcare Professionals Home Enteral Tube Feeding

Responsibility of the healthcare professionals

1 Assessment & Individualised Planning

- **Develop a personalised care plan** with the patient and/or carer, including feed type, delivery method, and nutritional goals.
- **Arrange contact** within 1-2 working days of discharge to home with an enteral tube.

2 Training & Education

- **Provide thorough initial and ongoing training** for patients and carers on tube management, feeding, how to give medications and troubleshooting.
- **Supply written information** at the time of tube insertion, covering:
  - Tube type and function
  - Feeding plan
  - How to administer medications and flushes
  - Red flags and management of emergencies related to the enteral tube
  - Stoma management (during healing and longer term)
  - Emotional support resources
  - Contact details for support
- **Ensure information is accessible** in multiple formats; leaflets, booklets, online, images/diagrams, including 'easy-read' formats.

3 Coordination of Care

- **Coordinate regular reviews** of the nutritional care plan, with a nutrition support team, including dietitians, nurses, and other professionals.
- **Ensure a seamless transition** from hospital to home, including provision of necessary supplies and contact details for support services.
- **Provide a comprehensive contact list** for all relevant support services (nutrition team, dietitian, homecare nurse, supply company, emergency contacts, local/ national patient / peer support groups (as appropriate)).

4 Monitoring & Support

- **Arrange ongoing monitoring** and review of feeding regimen, medication changes, tube care, and lifestyle needs.
- **Ensure access** to out-of-hours/24-hour support lines for urgent issues or emergencies.
- **Schedule regular follow-up visits** from appropriately trained professionals.
- **Ensure appropriate support** including home visits are arranged, especially in the early days after discharge. Home visits may be undertaken by homecare nurses, community nurses or dietitians.

Checklist for Healthcare Professionals
Home Enteral Tube Feeding

Responsibility of the healthcare professionals

5 Supplies & Equipment

- **Ensure the patient is discharged with sufficient feed and equipment in accordance with local policy.**
- **Contact the homecare provider to arrange timely and reliable delivery of feeds, equipment, and replacement tubes.**
- **Provide a replacement kit** (spare tube, plugs, tape, pH strips, lubricant) for emergencies where applicable.
- **Offer guidance** on ordering supplies, managing stock, and what to do if supplies run low.

6 Guidelines & Safety

- **Ensure adherence** to national guidance and local infection prevention protocols.
- **Provide clear instructions** on minimising infection risk (feed, flushing, stoma care).
- **Be aware of Quality Standards** for Nutritional Support in Adults – Promises made to your patients: https://bit.ly/BAPENQS

7 Person-centred Care & Emotional Support

- **Work in partnership with the patient and/or carer** to establish an appropriate feeding plan. Review their needs regularly and adjust as needed.
- **Ensure wherever possible the feeding regimen fits the individual's daily routine** and minimizes disruption.
- **Support carers** with information and advocacy resources.
- **Encourage participation in patient support groups** (e.g., PINNT, local and online communities) and signpost to emotional support services where needed.

8 Feedback & Quality Improvement

- **Set up systems** for patients and carers to provide feedback on services and care received.
- **Respond promptly** to concerns or suggestions for improvement.

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Checklist for a Homecare Provider Home Enteral Tube Feeding

Responsibility of the homecare provider

1 Initial Setup and Transition

- **Prompt Contact:** You should contact the patient within a week of discharge to arrange support and delivery of enteral tube feeding supplies (or as per local contract agreements).
- **Clear Discharge Pathway:** You should ensure a seamless transition from hospital to home, including provision of all necessary supplies and written contact details for support.

2 Training and Information

- **Hands-On Training:** Provide practical, hands-on training on tube management, feeding, and troubleshooting, tailored to the needs of individual people (where requested by the healthcare team).
- **Written and Visual Materials:** Provide access to clear, up-to-date written instructions, diagrams, and videos on tube care, feeding plans, and tube troubleshooting procedures. These resources should include 'easy-read' formats.
- **Emergency Guidance:** Outline instructions on what to do if the tube falls out or if problems arise, including a clear step-by-step guide.

3 Ongoing Support

- **Office hours:** Ensure the opening times for customer services are made clear.
- **Out of hours Helpline:** Provide information about support outside of office hours as well as where people should go for emergency support or advice.
- **Regular Follow-Up:** Schedule reviews and check-ins by trained homecare professionals (nurses, dietitians) to monitor patients where this is required.
- **Home Visits:** Where local NHS services are contracted homecare nurses should visit as needed, especially in the early days after discharge. Patients should know who to expect and when.

4 Supplies and Equipment

- **Reliable Delivery:** Ensure timely and reliable delivery of feeds, equipment, and replacement tubes where necessary.
- **Changes to expected delivery of supplies:** Provide proactive communication when items are unavailable, substituted or delayed beyond expected delivery times.
- **Spare Equipment:** Provide additional feeds and supplies to cover delays and supply issues.
- **Stock Management:** Provide guidance on how to order supplies, manage stock, and what to do if the patient runs low. Conversely, ensure that patients are not overstocked, especially where a product could be changed and result in significant waste.

Checklist for a Homecare Provider Home Enteral Tube Feeding

Responsibility of the homecare provider

5 Coordination and Communication

- **Multidisciplinary Coordination:** The homecare service should coordinate with the hospital team, GP, and community services to ensure continuity of care.
- **Contact List:** Provide a comprehensive list of contact numbers for all relevant support services (homecare nurse, supply company, emergency contacts).

6 Person-centred Care and Emotional Support

- **Respect and Compassion:** Members of the homecare team should expect to be treated with respect at all times; similarly, members of the homecare team should be respectful and show compassion for those receiving their service. Homecare staff in patient facing roles should receive training so they understand the importance of enteral feeding issues.
- **Emotional Support:** Recognise that a patient's situation may mean they would benefit from support and advocacy groups (e.g., PINNT), peer support, and psychological resources if needed. This may include carers whose wellbeing should be considered.

7 Quality and Safety

- **Adherence to Guidelines:**
  - National Guidance: Adherence to NICE guidance and local infection prevention protocols.
  - Infection Prevention: Clear instructions on minimising infection risk (feed, flushing, stoma care).
  - Quality Standards for Nutrition Support in Adults: Promises made to your patients https://bit.ly/BAPENQS

  Homecare services should ensure they follow the instructions and expectations of the referring healthcare teams.
- **Providing timely feedback:** The service must have a process to receive feedback by which patients and carers can raise concerns about the service and have them addressed promptly.

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