

FACTSHEET



This fact sheet is for educational purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for your child.

Using pH paper to check Nasogastric tubes

Your child's treating team will teach you how and when to use your baby/child's nasogastric tube.

How to check the nasogastric tube position

The contents of your baby/child's stomach are normally acidic.

If the tube is in the stomach, the acidic stomach fluid will normally have a pH of 4.5 or less. Using pH paper is a reliable way to check the tube is in the right position.

Step-by-step guide to measuring the acidity of stomach fluid

1. You will need to have your pH paper strip

These are in boxes with a colour chart (Picture 1)

2. Wash and dry your hands before and after checking the tube
3. If your baby/child already has a tube in place, check that:

- a. The amount of visible tube is the same length as before
- b. There is no loose tape
- c. There is no kinking of the tube at the back of your child's mouth (you may need a torch to see and to quickly



Picture 1- pH strips

depress your child's tongue out of the way)

4. If you are worried don't use the tube. Re-pass or replace the tube if necessary (your treating team will provide you with a plan of action for this)
5. Remove the cap from the end of the tube and attach syringe
6. Draw back the syringe plunger to get some fluid
7. Place a few drops of the fluid onto each of the squares of a pH strip
8. Place the pH strip near the chart the right way around with the 3 coloured pads lined up
9. Match the colour change on the strip to the colour chart on the box- see the next page

What does the pH mean?

- A pH reading of 4.5 or less shows that the tube is in the correct spot and you can now use the tube
- Do not use the tube if you are unsure or if the pH reading is more than 4.5
- Your health professional will explain what to do if the pH is more than 4.5 or if you are worried about the tube.

This handout should be read with the NSW Fact sheet 'Caring for your Child's Nasogastric Tube' available on www.hnekidshealth.nsw.gov.au



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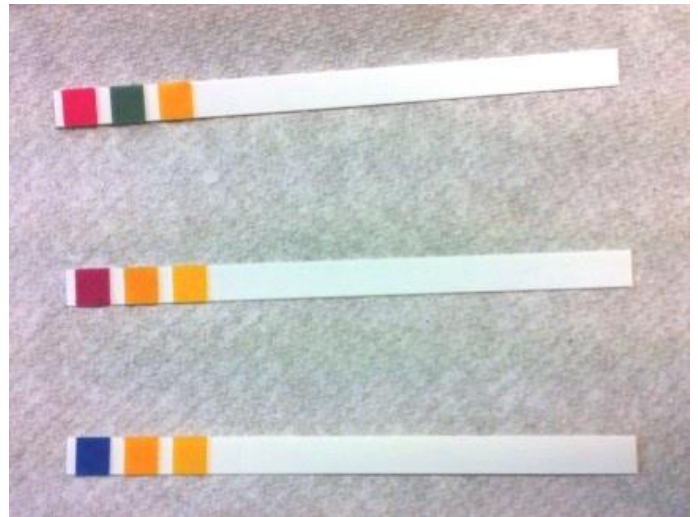
What should the pH paper look like?

When using the pH strip make sure the strip is lined up with the colour chart as shown in the picture on the left.

The long, white end must be facing away from the chart.

Each pad is made to give you an accurate reading within a range:

- The right pad only changes colour between 7.0- 9.0
- The middle pad only between 4.0- 7.0
- The far left pad only between 2.0- 4.5



Picture 3- pH strips colour changes



Picture 2- pH paper colour chart

The pH reading must be **less than 4.5**.

The top strip = pH 7.0 as the middle pad is green while the other 2 pads haven't changed colour.

The middle strip = pH 4.0 as the middle pad is still just starting to be a darker orange but the far left pad is a dark pink.

The bottom strip= pH 2.0 as the far left pad is blue.

Remember:

- If you are unsure- wait 5 minutes and take another sample.
- If you are still worried contact your health professional. Your health professional will also recommend who to call out-of-hours.
- **Never use a nasogastric tube if you are unsure.**