

Guideline for Confirmation of Nasogastric and Orogastric tubes in Critical Care

Background

- Insertion of Nasogastric (NG) or orogastric tubes (OG) is common in Critical Care for the administration of medications and enteral feed.
- Ensuring NG/OG tubes are correctly sited prior to use is crucial to avoid the potentially life-threatening complications associated with administration of feed or medications into the respiratory tract. This is a well recognised 'never event'¹.

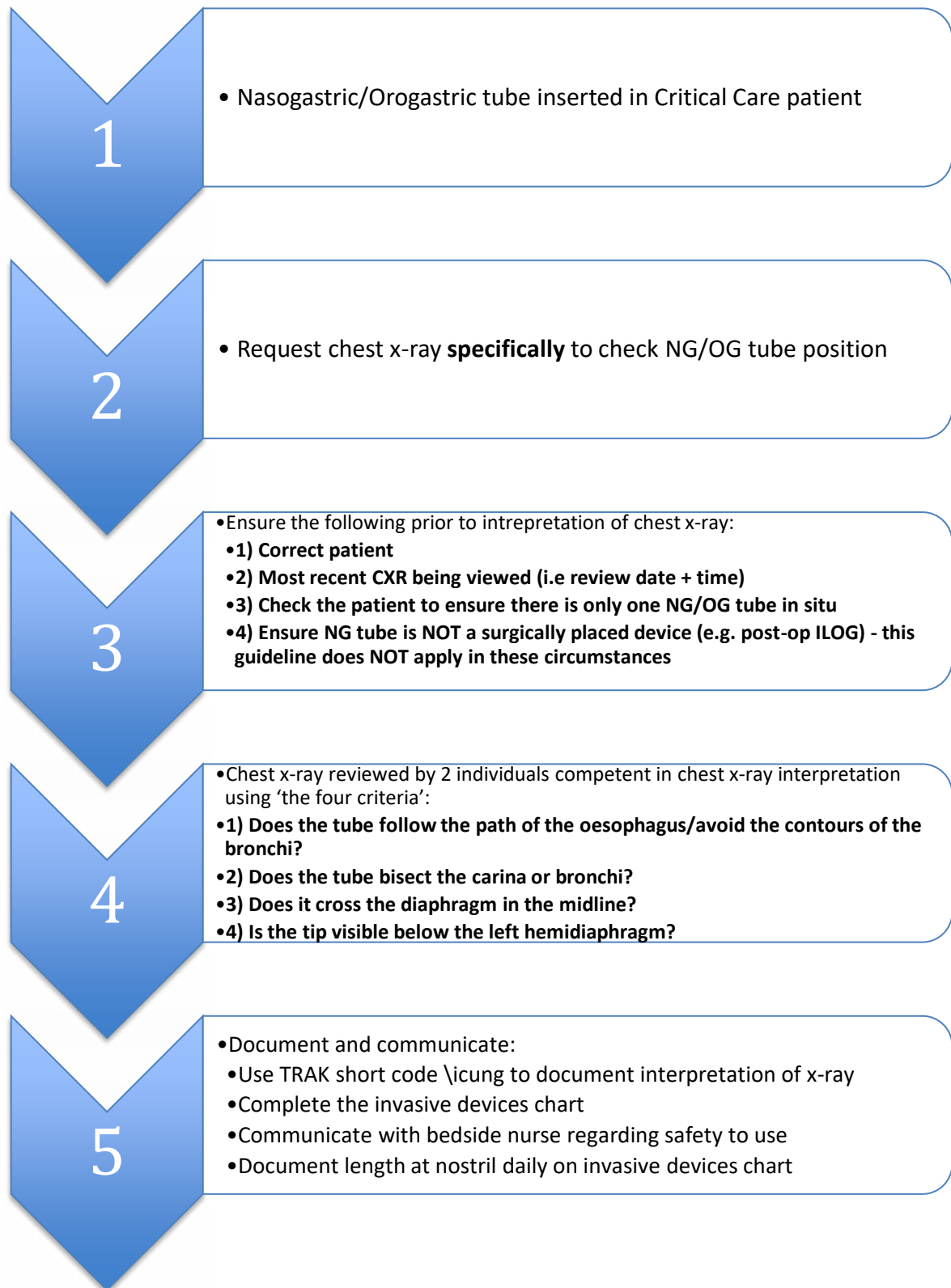
How should the position of an NG/OG tube be confirmed?

- Patients in Critical Care are often obtunded and at greater risk of aspiration of gastric content into the respiratory tract.
- As a consequence of this, and following recent guidance from BAPEN², **pH of aspirates obtained from an NG/OG tube should NOT be used to confirm the placement of these tubes in any patient in Critical Care.**
- All patients in Critical Care who have an NG/OG tube inserted, **must have a chest x-ray to confirm the position of the NG/OG tube prior to use.**
- It must be noted in the chest x-ray request that the x-ray is for purposes of checking position of the NG/OG tube, so that appropriate radiographs are obtained.
- The chest x-ray MUST be interpreted using 'the four criteria' (see below) and this interpretation MUST be documented using the structured documentation tool within the \ngicu TRAK shortcode.
- The chest x-ray must be reviewed by 2 individuals competent in interpretation of chest x-rays (a Doctor or Advanced Critical Care Practitioner who has successfully completed the NHS Lothian "Chest x-ray Confirmation of Nasogastric Tube Placement in Critical Care" module).
- **Please review the flow chart on page 2 for instructions on how to safely confirm correct NG/OG tube placement before 1st use.**
- Check length at the nostril daily and document on invasive devices chart

Practical points

- To limit the radiation dose to patients, where possible, x-rays for the purposes of confirming NG tube placement should be co-ordinated with other x-ray's for the patient e.g. CVC or ET tube position x-rays.

Flow Chart for Confirmation of Nasogastric/Orogastric Tubes in Critical Care



If in doubt about whether an NG/OG tube is in the correct position on x-ray, do NOT use the tube and seek senior advice

References

- 1) HSIB. Placement of Nasogastric Tubes [internet]. Farnborough: HSIB; 2020. Available from: https://www.hsib.org.uk/documents/268/HSIB_Placement_of_nasogastric_tubes_Report_V07.pdf
- 2) BAPEN. A Position Paper on Nasogastric Tube Safety: “Time to put safety first” [internet]. Astwood Bank Redditch: BAPEN; 2020. Available from: <https://www.bapen.org.uk/pdfs/ngsig/a-position-paper-on-nasogastric-tube-safety.pdf>

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