



Medical Needs

Sometimes a medical condition is part of life with disability and equipment is essential.

Examples

1. **Feeding tube:** a medical device used to provide nutrition to people who cannot obtain nutrition by mouth, are unable to swallow safely, or need nutritional supplementation.
2. **Shunt:** a flexible tube and valve system surgically implanted to treat hydrocephalus, which causes excess cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) in the brain.
3. **Tracheostomy, or “trach”:** a procedure to help air and oxygen reach the lungs by creating an opening into the trachea (windpipe) from outside the neck. A person with a tracheostomy breathes through a tracheostomy tube inserted in the opening.

Tips

- Understand that this is part of everyday life for this person. They may want to ignore it, talk about it, laugh about it, or show you how to use it. It may be essential but could also be annoying to them. Take cues from them about it. (Shunts are below the skin).
- Leave the equipment alone unless you are trained to use it. Ask trained staff, caregivers, and individuals what to do, if you think something needs to be done.
- Consider this equipment and how it will be involved if you are going somewhere special, planning an activity, or sharing food. The main thing is that this person is engaged in the group and activity -you may need to ask how to do something safely and effectively. Be aware that some shunts may be impacted by magnets.

References

- “6 Tips for Caring for a Loved One with a Feeding Tube,” Gastro Girl, gastrogirl.com/6-tips-for-caring-for-a-loved-one-with-a-feeding-tube/
- Magnetic Field Interference with Programmable CSF Shunts, USFDA, fda.gov/medical-devices/cerebral-spinal-fluid-csf-shunt-systems/magnetic-field-interference-programmable-csf-shunts
- “Ten Communication Options for Individuals with Tracheostomy,” Tracheostomy Education, tracheostomyeducation.com/blog/communication/communication-options/