

## *Coming to your Senses:*

### *How to assess a Gastrostomy device using your eyes, ears, nose and hands*

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Assessment is a key part of caring for the patient with a gastrostomy tube or button. It's important for the nurse or provider to assess the patient –not just the tube or site. It's easy to get focused on that one area of the body but often there are other things going on with the patient that are contributing to actual or perceived gastrostomy problems. With the exception of taste, all of the healthcare providers' senses can and should be used when assessing the patient in order to create the most comprehensive picture. This will ensure a quicker and more effective resolution to problems. Here is a sample of the most common elements to assess in the patient with a G-tube or button:



## **LOOK:**

Inspect the stoma, peri- tubular skin, gastrostomy device, abdomen and the overall health of the patient.

Is there drainage? What does it look like? How much is present? Is it from the tube, stoma or tissue?

What does the skin look like? Is it intact? Is there erythema, lesions and/or tissue growth? Is there swelling?

Is the abdomen distended?

Are there any scars, abnormalities or other devices on the abdomen?

What is the type/size of the G-tube/button?

Are dressings used? What kind? Are they making the button/ G-tube tight?

Is the tube intact? Does it fit well? Is it stabilized correctly?

Is there enough water in the balloon of a balloon-type device?

Is there tension on the tube or stoma? Is the stoma located in between skin folds?

What is the patient's general appearance? Is the respiratory status normal? Is the patient active and/or pulling the tube?

Does the patient have scoliosis, spasms or seizures? Are there other skin problems present? How is the patient positioned (sitting in a wheelchair-reclining or bent forward)?



## **LISTEN:**

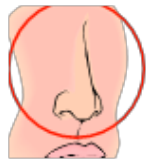
Get a complete history from the patient/family and medical record when possible. Take time to listen to complaints and concerns.

What problem is the patient having? Does this problem occur at a particular time? What makes it better or worse?

What are the patient's current regimens? Skin care, feeding, flushes, etc.

What changes have happened recently that could contribute to gastrostomy problems? For example weight changes, illness, new medications.

What treatments have been tried? Were these effective?



## **SMELL:**

Assess for abnormal odors.

Is there an odor coming from the tube or stoma?

## **FEEL:**

Palpate the gastrostomy site and abdomen.

Is the skin around the stoma warm to the touch? Is it firm or boggy? Is there any induration?

Is the abdomen firm? Can you palpate masses or abnormalities in the abdomen? Is there tenderness with palpation?

