

Title: Enteral Feeding Dilemmas: Navigating the Impact of Bacterial Contamination in Hospitalized Populations

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Abstract: Introduction: Enteral feeding is essential for hospitalized patients unable to consume oral nutrition. However, it poses a risk of bacterial contamination, leading to infections and increased morbidity and mortality. Method: Studies have shown that contaminated enteral feeds are associated with longer hospital stays and worsened patient outcomes. Common pathogens include Gram-negative bacilli (e.g., *Serratia* spp., *Klebsiella* spp., *Enterobacter* spp.), coagulase-negative staphylococci, and *Clostridium difficile*. Preventing contamination requires identifying and mitigating potential routes. This comprehensive approach encompasses careful practices during production, storage, preparation, and administration of enteral feeds. Result: Early initiation of enteral feeding has also been linked to lower infection rates. Standardized protocols, hand hygiene adherence, routine monitoring for infection signs, and ongoing staff education are crucial for safe enteral feeding. Further research is needed to better understand risk factors for contamination and evaluate the effectiveness of preventive interventions. Conclusion: Addressing these knowledge gaps can significantly improve the quality of enteral feeding and reduce infection burden in hospitalized patients.

Key words: Enteral feeding, bacterial contamination, hospitalized patients, infection prevention, nutritional support, infection.

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