

## Tube Feeding in Schools

### Why are changes needed?

- Following the transition of Nursing Support Services (NSS) to BC Children's Hospital in April 2015, we have reviewed all aspects of school-based services to ensure that the care provided in schools across BC is safe, consistent, standardized, equitable and in accordance with professional standards and provincial legislation.
  - BC Children's policies on [SHOP](#)
- This review found that some students supported through an NSS delegated care plan for feeding in schools did not have valid medical orders that met requirements because the orders were:
  1. More than one-year old.
  2. Written for school staff to provide feeding "as per parents." Nurses are [legally required to follow orders from a licensed health care provider](#).
  3. Written by a Registered Dietitian (RD), but there was no clear indication that the authority to write the order was delegated to the professional by a most responsible Physician.

### What are the changes?

- Under an NSS delegated care plan, tube feeding in schools is treated as a therapy and therefore, requires valid medical orders written in the previous 365 days.
- For the 2023/24 school year, students will continue to receive care with a requirement that valid orders must be in place. Valid orders must:
  1. Be issued within the previous 365 days.
  2. Clearly describe feed volume, rate, time and the specifics of the formulation/recipe, including additives.
  3. Be issued by a most responsible Physician, Nurse Practitioner (NP) or RD.
  4. Orders written by an RD must clearly indicate Physician delegation to write feeding orders (i.e. Provider must order "Feeds as per Dietitian")
  5. Follow relevant BC Children's Hospital policies - [see details here](#).

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Can a student be on "ad lib" feeding or "feeds as tolerated"?

- In schools, feeds are often administered in a space separate from peers that affects the student's educational and social experience. Having a consistent feeding schedule supports the student and the goals of NSS-delegated care to provide safe, required care during the student's 6-hour school day. NSS's goal is to facilitate and optimize each student's learning experience; to limit the medicalization of the school setting while ensuring students receive the care they need to stay healthy and safe.

## What happens if the student has regular feeding intolerance (e.g. vomiting)?

- As care at school is provided by non-medical school staff who do not have the skills nor training to make clinical assessments or decisions, it is the responsibility of the Physician/NP/Dietitian and parents/guardians to work together to determine a plan for school that is relatively stable, known, and predictable to meet day-to-day needs. Care at school may be different from care provided at home.

## Can a student receive gravity or syringe feeds?

- Pump feeding is an established standard of care in community and offers the safest, most consistent means of administration in the school setting.
- Syringe feeding, while preferred by some families, cannot control for factors such as rate of feed or the pressure required to deliver the feed. These variables increase the potential for harm when delivered by non-medical school staff.
- Syringe feeding is currently under review during the 2023-24 school year. This review will determine necessary parameters to support safe and consistent care for students.

## Can a student be on home-blenderized tube feeds?

- Specialized feeding requests/requirements such as non-commercially prepared formulas or home-blenderized feeds will be considered on a case-by-case basis as these are outside of the community standard of care.
- The local NSS Coordinator, in partnership with the NSS provincial office, will consult with the student's most responsible Physician / NP, and/or RD care team, to determine if the request can be safely supported under the act of delegation in the school setting.