



## Decision Tool for New Aspects of Dietetic Practice

**Authority:** *Health Professions Act* (HPA), section 16(2); Dietitians Regulation and CDBC Bylaws (Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice).

### Background

Dietitians are encouraged to reflect on emerging topics and new aspects of dietetic practice and determine if these are within full scope of dietetic practice and aligned with the CDBC Bylaws (Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice).

The College of Dietitians of BC is a resource for Dietitians as they explore new areas of practice.

The following guiding questions and considerations form a decision tool to help Dietitians decide if it is appropriate for them to take on a new aspect of practice (e.g., new task, role or nutrition-related topic). This resource was adapted in part from the College of Dietitians of Ontario's 2014 article on "Keeping Pace with Innovations in Nutrition Care".

### Guiding Questions and Informed Decisions

**Q Is the new aspect of practice related to dietetic scope of practice?**

Full scope of practice is defined in the [Dietitians Regulation](#) and enables a broad spectrum of activities:

"dietetics" means the assessment of nutritional needs, design, implementation and evaluation of nutritional care plans and therapeutic diets, the science of food and human nutrition, and dissemination of information about food and human nutrition to attain, maintain and promote the health of individuals, groups and the community.

**Q Does it involve restricted activities?**

The practice of enteral and parenteral nutrition require registration with [Restricted Activities](#) in BC and specific [continuing competence](#) requirements.

Other activities are restricted in BC legislation (e.g., prescribing drugs and inserting a needle below the dermis). Dietitians may only perform activities that are authorized within CDBC legislation.

Dietitians must ensure they are registered with appropriate Restricted Activities before practicing them.

**Q Are my personal competencies up-to-date to practice safely, ethically and competently?**

Consider your own personal scope of practice. Do you have the knowledge, skills and judgement to take on a new aspect of practice safely, ethically and competently?

New aspects of practice may be acquired at any time during one's career. Dietitians should consider how to acquire new competencies if it is in their clients' interest. Planning continuing education that may be needed to properly address new aspects of practice is an important part of the decision.

Dietitians should also weigh the risk of saying "no" based on their existing competence and referring the client to another health professional versus taking on the new aspect of practice.

**Q Does it also require specific skills for the client that needs to be assessed and counseled?**

Dietitians may need to provide education to their clients for them to access dietetic services or understand an aspect of care (e.g., [virtual dietetic practice](#) where clients need to know how to use software for remote counseling session.)

**Q Are there guidelines, position papers or scientific literature available to guide my practice?**

**Do I have all the information to make an evidence-informed nutritional assessment and recommendation/plan?**

Dietitians are expected to provide evidence-informed practice that is based on review of factual and objective evidence. With emerging and new practices, there may often be insufficient, inconclusive and changing evidence available. Dietitians must ensure to take this into consideration and adapt their practice based on the latest and best evidence available.

Dietitians are also expected to gather objective information about their client to make an informed assessment of the client's nutritional requirements. This responsibility requires interprofessional collaboration and communication as the Dietitian is often gathering objective information measured by another health professional.

**Q Do I know who needs to be involved in the team to optimize the care and follow-up?**

Dietitians should understand other regulated health professionals' scope of practice and know who to refer to /consult with in their client's interest.

**Q Is there a work policy that I need to follow for this aspect of practice?**

Organizational policies and other healthcare related legislation may limit who can do what and under what conditions (e.g. an order or prescription). Overlap of scope in legislation is intended to provide flexibility within the health care framework to meet client needs.

Dietitians are expected to abide by legislated requirements and collaborate with other health professionals who may share their scope of practice. Interprofessional healthcare must be delivered safely and collaboratively, in the interest of the client.

Emerging practice may also only happen within research protocols in some instances. Dietitians are accountable to the

same requirements whether practice is within the context of research or a regular service provided.

**Q Does the client have all the information necessary to make an informed decision and consent?**

Dietitians may refer to the CDBC guidelines on [Consent to Nutrition Care](#) to inform this decision.

**Q Am I respecting the client's needs, values, goals and circumstances?**

This consideration may need to be balanced with evidence-informed recommendations. The [Code of Ethics](#) details client-centered care considerations.

**Q Is there a potential conflict of interest involved in the task? Do I need to disclose it or recuse myself?**

Dietitians are responsible for identifying and managing any real, perceived or potential conflicts of interest where their professional integrity could be interpreted as being compromised.

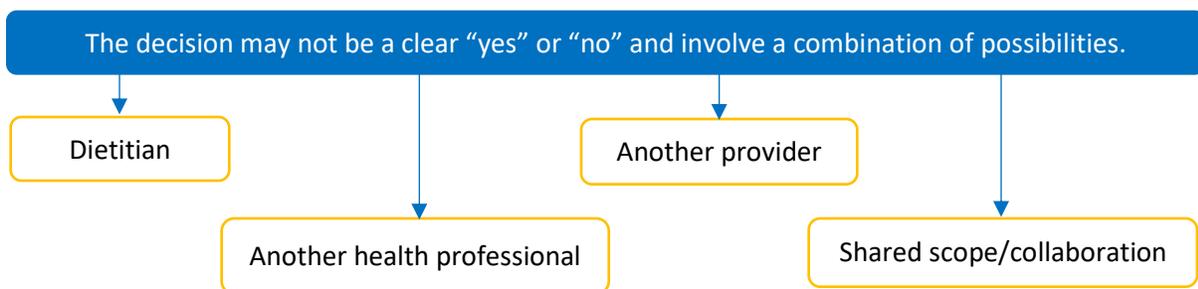
Financial benefit is not necessary to establish a conflict of interest. The perception of engaging in self-serving actions may compromise the trust involved in a relationship between a Dietitian and a client.

Conflict of interest is managed through disclosure, recusal and/or discontinuation of professional services.

**Q Possible decisions:**

Decisions on how to best address a new aspect of dietetic practice should be client-centric, taking into consideration:

- Full scope of practice, including Restricted Activities
- Legal and organizational requirements
- Competence and evidence-based information needs and,
- Interprofessional collaboration



The College of Dietitians of British Columbia thanks the College of Dietitians of Ontario for their generous permission to quote and adapt, in whole or in part, from their "Keeping Pace with Innovations in Nutrition Care" publication.