



Standards for Ordering Bloodwork

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The Nova Scotia Regulator of Dietetics (NSRD) is the regulatory body for the profession of dietetics in Nova Scotia. In the public interest, the NSRD regulates dietitians and nutritionists to practice in a safe, ethical and competent manner.

Date Approved:

These standards define the expectations for dietitians authorized by the Nova Scotia Regulator of Dietetics (NSRD) to order bloodwork, supporting the assessment and monitoring of nutritional status and related interventions.

Dietitians are accountable to practice in accordance with the dietetic scope of practice, their employment scope of practice and their individual scope of practice. Dietitians must have the knowledge, skill and competence to engage in an area of practice before performing a specific activity. Failure to comply with the standards of practice may be considered professional misconduct.

When ordering monitoring parameters, dietitians must:

- Assess the clinical relevance and ensure that the results are not otherwise available,
- be aware of the evidence, outcomes, and cost effectiveness,
- collaborate and consult with health care professionals, as appropriate,
- assess the client's willingness for the dietitian to order the bloodwork,
- provide clients with all relevant information.

A dietitian's decision to order bloodwork must be in the best interest of the client's health and safety, evidence-informed, and focused on optimizing health outcomes for the client. A dietitian must use professional judgment to determine the appropriateness of their knowledge and understanding of ordering bloodwork in a specific situation.

The dietitian must ensure a process is in place for when the dietitian is unable to follow up on a diagnostic test result or if test results are outside of the expected range. The dietitian must have a defined process outlining how follow up, consultation, and communication with other health care providers will occur, particularly when the dietitian is unable to follow up on test results independently or when the care extends beyond the dietetic scope of practice. A dietitian must recognize and accept responsibility for the impact of their ordering bloodwork on their client and the health care system's overall costs and sustainability.

Role of NSRD

In the public interest, the NSRD regulates dietitians and nutritionists to practice in a safe, ethical and competent manner. In line with this mandate, the NSRD is accountable to:

- license dietitians and authorize dietitians to prescribe bloodwork,
- implement regulatory standards for ordering bloodwork, and
- act when a dietitian does not engage in safe, ethical and competent care.

Role of the Employer

To optimize access to care, employers recognize and authorize dietitians to order bloodwork within their organization and establish policies and procedures to support this practice. Employment policies further identify the circumstances and parameters to direct ordering bloodwork.

Role of the Dietitian

The dietitian supports a client's access to the health system. When engaging in ordering bloodwork, a dietitian must:

- thoroughly understand their individual and employment scope of practice,
- have a clear understanding of the Standards for Ordering Bloodwork (2025), NSRD Code of Ethics (2024) and Standards of Practice (2020) and order according to these ethical standards,
- understand their accountability as a self-regulated health professional, and
- use professional judgement to self-assess their competence, identify knowledge gaps relevant to their employment scope of practice and develop a learning plan to fill these gaps through the continuing competency program.

Standards of Practice for Ordering Bloodwork by Dietitians

The following standards describe the expectations for dietitians authorized to order bloodwork.

Standard 1: Responsibility and Accountability

Dietitians are accountable to order monitoring parameters safely, competently, compassionately, and ethically and are accountable to clients, the employer, the profession, and the public.

Dietitians must:

- 1.1 Only order and review bloodwork for individuals who fall within their professional circle of care.
- 1.2 Order and interpret screening and diagnostic tests that are relevant to the client's condition.
- 1.2 Use evidence-informed practice for appropriateness, safety, and cost-effectiveness when ordering screening and diagnostic tests to support their prescribing decisions.
- 1.3 Use a systematic and timely process to receive, document, track, and act on test results, including identifying and following up on abnormal or critical values.
- 1.4 Adhere to provincial and/or employee standards/policies for ordering, documenting, and reporting the results of screening and diagnostic tests and associated prescriptions.
- 1.5 Establish or follow a defined process for timely follow-up and communication of test results, including collaboration with other health care providers when follow-up if it is outside of the dietitian's scope.
- 1.6 Ensure documentation complies with NSRD Standards for Ordering Bloodwork and employer documentation standards, including the rationale for ordering, test interpretation, and follow-up actions.

Standard 2: Knowledge-Based Practice

Registered Dietitians apply evidence informed knowledge, skill, and judgement to address the needs of clients with health conditions that impact nutrition status for which they are ordering bloodwork.

Dietitians must:

- 2.1 Synthesize relevant knowledge to contribute to the plan of care through associated blood screening or diagnostic tests.
- 2.2 Attain, maintain, and demonstrate competencies relevant to the identified client health conditions and the impact on nutrition status as well as the medications and associated diagnostic tests for that condition.

2.3 Clearly document the decision to order bloodwork.

2.4 Conduct a thorough and accurate nutrition assessment.

2.5 Develop a plan of care in collaboration with the client and other health care team members as needed that includes information about the bloodwork results, follow up plan and evaluation.

Standard 3: Client-Centered Relationships

Registered dietitians establish professional and therapeutic relationships using a client-centered approach.

Dietitians must:

3.1 Communicate with the client about the nutrition assessment and bloodwork findings, including potential outcomes.

3.2 Consult with clients on the reasons for ordering bloodwork and the associated benefits and risks.

3.3 Confirm the client's understanding of their nutrition plan of care related to their bloodwork screening tests.

Standard 4: Professional Relationships and Leadership

Registered Dietitians collaborate and consult with health care team members and demonstrate leadership to deliver quality dietetic and health care services.

Dietitians must:

4.1 Collaborate with members of the client's health care team when determining to ordering bloodwork.

4.2 Consult with appropriate health care team members when another's professional expertise is required.

4.3 Establish appropriate methods for informing relevant health care team members of their mutual client's nutrition status and treatment decisions.

Standard 5: Individual Self-Regulation

Individual dietitians are accountable to regulate themselves in accordance with their legislated and individual scope of practice, scope of employment, and requirements as defined by NSRD.

Dietitians must:

5.1 Not order bloodwork for themselves and/or family members.

5.2 Maintain an accurate, current employer and work contact information in the NSRD database.

Standard 6: Critical Test Results and Follow up

Dietitians must ensure that there is a timely and appropriate response to critical or abnormal test results in accordance with The Standards for Ordering Bloodwork, best practices, employer policies, and in collaboration with health care team

Dietitians must:

6.1 Establish and follow protocols for identifying and responding to critical results or significantly abnormal test results, including communication and documentation steps.

6.2 Ensure a system is in place to receive critical results for a test being ordered, including but not limited to:

6.2.1 Ensuring the dietitian is available and accessible 24/7 to receive critical results, or having a formal alternative plan in place for timely response, and

6.2.2 making after hours and emergency contact information available to the facility processing the test to support timely contact with the dietitian in the event of a critical test result.

6.3 Ensure timely communication of critical results to the appropriate health care provider(s), especially when results fall outside the dietitian's scope or when urgent follow-up is required.

6.4 Document actions taken in response to critical results, including who was notified and what follow-up occurred.

6.5 Determine and communicate a follow-up plan with the client, including next steps and when/how results will be reviewed.

Glossary

Critical Test Results: Any test results for which delays in reporting can result in serious adverse outcomes for patients and that may require intervention by a health care provider prior to routine laboratory report review (Nova Scotia Pharmacy Regulator, 2025).

Professional Judgement: Applying knowledge, skills, and experience, in a way that is informed by professional standards, laws, and ethical principles, to develop an opinion or decision about what should be done to best serve clients (NSRD Ordering and Prescribing Standards for Dietitians, 2025).

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