

# Sips to Stop Malnutrition

## NutraPass Program

August 2025



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## Contact and Acknowledgements

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This toolkit has been prepared by Nutrition Services, Alberta Health Services.

For more information, please contact: [Nutrition\\_Resources@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:Nutrition_Resources@albertahealthservices.ca)

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## Information for Health Professionals

### What is NutraPass?

NutraPass is a program that gives patients small portions (60–90 mL) of a nutrition drink 3–5 times per day, either between meals or with medications. This gives patients extra protein and calories without making them too full to eat at meals.

### Why use NutraPass?

Good nutrition is needed to help maintain strength and support recovery and overall health. NutraPass can provide a boost of energy and protein when food alone may not be enough.



### Who is NutraPass for?

NutraPass may be suitable for patients who

- Can eat or drink by mouth
- Are at risk of malnutrition
- Are recovering from illness, surgery, or wounds
- Need to maintain or gain weight
- Need to improve muscle or fat mass
- Do not eat enough at meals (less than 50%)
- Are fluid-restricted

### How is NutraPass ordered?

NutraPass can be ordered by a dietitian, physician, or nurse practitioner. It is listed within the Medical Administration Record (MAR) and provided by nursing staff.

## Evidence Shows



74–96%

patient compliance  
with NutraPass<sup>1-4</sup>



30%

increase in calorie  
intake with  
NutraPass<sup>4</sup>



100%

of staff report  
NutraPass is **easy**<sup>1</sup>

## Preparing to Implement NutraPass

If your unit is new to NutraPass, there are some things you will need to consider. Use the following prompts to guide planning and coordination before implementation:

### Unit Level Requirements

- ☐ How many patients on your unit do you estimate will need NutraPass?
- ☐ Which NutraPass product will be used? Ensure® Advance or Resource® 2.0? A dietitian can help choose the best product for your patient population.

### Materials and Supplies

- ☐ NutraPass product
- ☐ Cups
- ☐ Labels—to mark the date and time

### Storage

- ☐ Where will the NutraPass product be stored on the unit?
- ☐ Is a refrigerator available for storing opened containers of NutraPass product?
- ☐ Where will cups and labels be stored?

### Process

- ☐ Who will portion the NutraPass? Nurses, health care aides, or others?
- ☐ Where will NutraPass be portioned? This may be in the medication area, kitchenette, or outside of patient rooms.
- ☐ If you are using paper cups, you will need to identify a method for nursing to measure the volume of NutraPass product. Graduated medicine cups, if available on the unit, could be one option.

### Education and Training

- ☐ Have educators and unit champions review this toolkit.
- ☐ Use the **NutraPass: Quick Guide for Nurses** as a reference for frontline staff.

Procurement of materials and supplies can vary between zone and site. Unit managers can coordinate with their dietitian to determine which items are needed and how they can be ordered.

- Cups for NutraPass:
  - Ensure® Cups – have 60 mL and 90 mL lines for easy measuring
  - Paper cups (3 oz or 5 oz) – no measurement line
- NutraPass product:
  - Resource® 2.0 – vanilla only
  - Ensure® Advance – vanilla and chocolate

## Frequently Asked Questions

### About NutraPass

#### Why was the name changed from Med Pass to NutraPass?

Feedback from staff highlighted that Med Pass was often confused with medications given to patients when they were on pass from the hospital. NutraPass more clearly identifies the program as a nutrition-related order, while keeping the name familiar and recognizable. The name was selected in consultation with legal, which limited some naming options, but helped to ensure trademark rules were followed.

#### Why are there two different orders for NutraPass?

There are two NutraPass products, Ensure® Advance and Resource® 2.0, each with its own unique order in Connect Care. These products vary in calories, protein, recommended volume, flavour, and allergen profile. A dietitian can help you determine which nutrition product should be used for NutraPass based on your patient population.

#### Why is NutraPass on the MAR, but other nutrition-related orders are not?

NutraPass is stocked on the unit and is administered similar to medications, which is why it appears on the MAR. When the volume consumed is documented on the MAR, it will flow to the In/Out flowsheet and activity. In contrast, oral nutrition supplements (ONS) and enteral nutrition (EN) are managed by Patient Food Services, who do not have access to the MAR. Because of this, ONS and EN cannot follow the same workflow and must be documented in the In/Out flowsheet. This process will not change with the addition of NutraPass to the MAR.

#### Can an open container of NutraPass be used for more than one patient?

Yes. NutraPass products are not patient-specific and should be dispensed outside of patient rooms. This allows a single container to be safely used for multiple patients and helps reduce waste.

#### How long can open containers of NutraPass be used before discarding?

Containers of NutraPass product should be clearly labelled with the date and time they were opened. Leftover product should be stored in the fridge. Discard any remaining product after 24 hours if refrigerated or after 4 hours if left at room temperature.

#### Can we use NutraPass for pediatric patients?

Pediatric units are not currently prepared or trained to implement NutraPass. If considering use in this population, consult with your dietitian to ensure appropriate planning and supports are in place.

## Allergy and Special Diet Considerations

### How do I know if a patient with food allergies can receive NutraPass?

Connect Care will alert the prescriber if there are any allergy/contraindications between the patient's documented food allergies and NutraPass. If a food allergy is added after NutraPass has been ordered, a warning will appear if there is an allergy/contraindication.

### My patient reports being allergic to lactose. Why is that not identified as an allergen of concern?

NutraPass products contain small amounts of lactose and should be avoided in patients with a true lactose allergy. However, most patients who report a lactose allergy are lactose intolerant, which is usually managed by following a low-lactose diet. If your patient has lactose listed as an allergy and you're unsure how to proceed, consult your dietitian for guidance.

### Can a patient with diet restrictions receive NutraPass?

It depends on the dietary restriction. Connect Care will not alert the prescriber if NutraPass is not compatible with the patient's diet order.

Use the chart below to determine if NutraPass is appropriate for your patient. If the diet is not appropriate, notify a prescriber so NutraPass can be discontinued. If the diet is not listed in the chart below and you are unsure, talk to a dietitian.

Diet Order	Ensure® Advance	Resource® 2.0
NPO	X	X
<b>Therapeutic Diets</b>		
Diabetic	✓	✓
Low Lactose	✓	✓
Gluten Free	✓	✓
Thickened Fluids	X	X
<b>Cultural or Religious Diets</b>		
Halal Style	X	✓
Kosher	✓	✓
Vegan	X	X
Lacto-ovo vegetarian	✓	✓

✓ = Appropriate X = Not Appropriate

### Why is a diabetes-specific nutritional supplement not used for NutraPass?

The nutritional supplements used for NutraPass are appropriate for patients with diabetes. These products are better sources of protein and calories and are preferred over diabetes-specific formulations. The small portions provided through NutraPass usually do not have a significant impact on blood glucose levels. Continue to monitor and manage blood glucose as per site-specific protocols.

## NutraPass and Medications

### How can I identify if there are drug-nutrient interactions with NutraPass?

Check the MAR for any medications scheduled with NutraPass. Do not give NutraPass at the same time as medications that have any of the following instructions:

- Take on an empty stomach, before or after meals
- Avoid taking with dairy, milk, or enteral feeds
- Take away from calcium-, magnesium-, iron-, or protein-containing products

If needed, adjust the administration times of NutraPass to avoid interactions.

### We usually use water (or another beverage) for medications. Will this change?

NutraPass products can be used instead of water (or another beverage) for most oral medications. This provides an opportunity to deliver extra nutrition at times when a patient would otherwise not receive it. It can be especially helpful for those on fluid restrictions, when fluid intake must be limited.

### What if my patient needs to take their medications with pureed foods, such as applesauce?

NutraPass can still be given **if** the patient can safely swallow thin fluids. Patients can drink the product before or after taking their medications. Patients who require thickened fluids to drink are **not** appropriate for NutraPass.

### Can NutraPass be given if a patient is not receiving medications?

Yes. While typically offered during medication times, NutraPass can still be given between meals when no medications are scheduled.

### Why do we not barcode-scan NutraPass products like other medications?

NutraPass products are not supplied by Pharmacy and are not patient-specific. Because of this, they are not included in the barcode scanning system. Nurses will not be prompted to scan these products during administration.

## Going Home

### Will NutraPass continue for my patient after going home?

NutraPass orders do not carry over after hospital discharge. If you feel your patient may still benefit from an oral nutrition supplement, speak with the dietitian. They can review options with the patient and provide a prescription, if needed.

## Additional Resources

The resources below support our overall nutrition strategy by helping patients eat better across care settings. They are intended to promote good nutrition and complement the use of NutraPass.

- [Tips to promote eating well in hospital](#)
- [Tips to get patients ready for meals](#)
- [Bringing food from home](#)
- [Eating well in hospital](#)
- [Nutrition Supplements](#)
- [Malnutrition Strategy](#)

## References

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