



College of  
Dietitians  
of Ontario

## Ordering Laboratory Tests for Nutrition Assessment & Monitoring

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### SECTION I Preamble

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has indicated that it will authorize RDs “To order specified laboratory tests as set out in regulation for nutritional assessment and monitoring.” The Ministerial regulation that will specify the lab tests which Registered Dietitians will be able to order has not as yet been passed. Until it is, the authority to order lab test will not be in effect.

RDs should be aware that the authority to order laboratory tests will not be for diagnostic purposes. Unless a laboratory test will provide a result specific to nutrition assessment and monitoring the test may not be ordered by RDs. The laboratory tests that RDs are permitted to order will be listed in a Minister’s Regulation made under the authority of the *Regulated Health Professions Act* (1991) and will be made available to RDs.

The Professional Practice Standard for *Ordering Laboratory Tests for Nutrition Assessment & Monitoring* outlines the expectations for RDs when performing this authority.



## SECTION II Prior to ordering laboratory tests for nutrition assessment & monitoring, RDs must:

1. Have the required knowledge, skills and judgment for ordering the lab tests and using the results in relation to the specific client conditions being assessed and monitored;
2. Understand the policies and procedures for ordering laboratory tests within their specific work setting;
3. Determine whether the test is clinically indicated given the specific client conditions and potential impact on nutrition care planning;
4. Determine if the lab test is listed in the Ministerial regulation that lists the lab tests that can be ordered by RDs in Ontario (this will be an appendix to the Practice Standards when available)
5. Consider the client's specific circumstances when assessing contraindications, precautions, risks and benefits associated with laboratory testing;
6. Consider the cost-effectiveness of the laboratory tests and any appropriate alternatives and make an effort to avoid duplication by reviewing available medical health records and information from the client and other health care providers, discussion with clients and other health care providers, as appropriate; and
7. Not transfer the authority to order laboratory tests to others.

A complex set of interdependent laws and regulations have been put in place for RDs to have the authority to order laboratory tests for nutrition assessment and monitoring. These include amendments to regulations under the:

- *Public Hospitals Act,*
- *Health Insurance Act,*
- *Laboratory and Specimen Collection Centre Licensing Act,* and
- *Medical Laboratory Technology Act.*

**As a result, RDs may not transfer the authority to order laboratory tests for nutrition assessment and monitoring to others, including other health care professionals and dietetic interns.**

### SECTION III RDs collaborate and communicate with clients and other health care professionals when ordering laboratory tests, and must:

1. Obtain informed client consent, as appropriate:
  - a) Explain to clients the rationale and clinical significance of ordering the laboratory tests;
  - b) Indicate the nature of the test (e.g., sample of blood, urine, or stool) and provide or ensure the provision of relevant information to enable the client to prepare (e.g., fasting state) for the laboratory test;
  - c) Outline the possible risks and contraindications for performing the laboratory tests including alternate ways to complete nutritional assessment/monitoring, as applicable;
2. Outline the process for communicating laboratory test results with clients including timeframe and whether only abnormal results will be communicated or all results will be communicated;
3. \*Communicate the laboratory test results with clients in a timely manner. When communicating laboratory test results to clients, RDs must:
  - a) Include relevant clinical information;
  - b) Describe the impact of the laboratory test results on nutrition care;
  - c) Outline any revisions/next steps for the client's nutrition care plan;
  - d) Indicate the expected future outcomes; and
  - e) Refer the client to relevant health care provider(s), as appropriate;
4. Notify other health care providers of any clinically-significant results, as appropriate, in a timely manner; and
5. Refrain from communicating a medical diagnosis to clients.

#### **\*Communicating Laboratory Test Results:**

RDs may communicate the results of laboratory tests to clients, including elevated, normal or low values, provided they are not violating the controlled act of communicating a diagnosis as outlined in section 27(2) of the *Regulated Health Professions Act* (1991):

"1. Communicating to the individual or his or her personal representative a diagnosis identifying a disease or disorder as the cause of symptoms of the individual in circumstances in which it is reasonably foreseeable that the individual or his or her personal representative will rely on the diagnosis."<sup>1</sup>

If RDs have ordered laboratory tests and the results are indicative of an undiagnosed medical disease or disorder, RDs cannot communicate the presence or label of the specific medical disease or disorder to the client. In this case, RDs must refer clients to their primary health care provider (Physician or Nurse Practitioner, as appropriate) or "orphaned" clients to a walk-in clinic or hospital emergency room for further investigation and for communication of any medical diagnosis.

**SECTION IV RDs are accountable for confirming there are appropriate mechanisms in place in their practice settings to follow-up on laboratory tests results specifically, and must:**

1. Ensure there is a reliable system in place for tracking the laboratory tests that have been ordered by the RD and the results received;
2. Ensure that there is effective reliable system in place for timely review of laboratory test results ordered by the RD;
3. Use professional judgment to provide timely follow-up care to clients as required;  
Be available so that laboratories can communicate critical laboratory test results in a timely manner as needed, or ensure there is a reliable system in place within their workplace for this purpose.

**SECTION V RDs must ensure clear documentation of all aspects of ordering laboratory tests including:**

1. Informed client consent (verbal or written), as appropriate;
2. The date and type of laboratory tests ordered and the date of test or receipt of the results;
3. The clinical significance and impact of the laboratory test results on nutrition assessment and monitoring;
4. Any follow-up tests ordered and care provided to the client; and
5. Referrals to other health care providers, as appropriate.

**SECTION VI Compliance with CDO Standards of Professional Practice**

It is expected that all RDs will comply with the Professional Practice Standard for *Ordering Laboratory Tests for Nutrition Assessment & Monitoring* when performing this authority. RDs are required to practice within their individual level of competence and meet the Standards that are relevant to their practice environment and practice functions. Where RDs are falling below the College's expectations, Standards of Professional Practice will be used as a basis for assessments or investigations and may guide the development of remediation plans

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**References**

- 1 *Regulated Health Professions Act*, (1991), Schedule 1, Self Governing Health Professions, 27(2.1). Available from: [http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_91r18\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_91r18_e.htm)