

Nutrition supports including meal preparation

Quick summary: Everybody needs food and drink to stay healthy. Your disability may mean you have trouble preparing food for yourself, eating enough, or understanding the nutrition you need. This could be because of physical, cognitive, or psychosocial disability. We may fund nutrition supports to help with this.

Nutrition supports might include nutritional supplements or a dietitian to create a meal plan for you. NDIS supports might also include someone to help you follow a meal plan. Or someone to help you plan, shop for, and prepare meals if your disability means you have trouble doing this yourself. In some situations, nutrition supports may include the cost of meal preparation and delivery. However, nutrition supports do not include the cost of the food and groceries as these are an everyday cost that everybody pays for.

NDIS supports could also include products and equipment to help you take in your food and drink, like thickeners and enteral feeding.

Note:

- When we say ‘your plan’, we mean your NDIS plan.
- When we say ‘disability support needs’, we mean supports you need for the impairments that meet the disability or early intervention requirements, or both.¹
- If you’re aged between 9 and 65 years and are looking for information about Community connections, go to [Our Guideline – Community connections](#).
- If your child is younger than 9 and you’re looking for information about Early connections, go to [Our Guideline – Early connections](#).
- As part of the recent changes to the NDIS laws we are moving towards a new framework for planning. Rules need to be developed for this new framework. We’re working on how and when we’ll introduce these changes.

Until then, the information in this Our Guideline is about our ‘old framework’ for planning, which include the legislative changes that became operational when the law commenced.

All current plans will be known as 'old framework' plans, and we will continue to develop these until all participants have transitioned to the new framework.

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You might also be interested in:

- [Disability-related health supports](#)
- [Mainstream and community supports](#)
- [Dysphagia supports](#)
- [What does NDIS fund?](#)
- [Would we fund it guide – food and meal preparation](#)

What do we mean by nutrition supports?

Nutrition supports are supports that can help you get nutrition if your disability affects the type of nutrition you need and how you eat. This can be help from someone to understand the types of food you need to stay healthy. You may also need help to prepare meals and follow a meal plan. Nutrition supports can also include equipment and products to help you get the nutrition you need. For example, your disability may mean you need nutritional supplements to get enough nutrition.

There are many ways you can get the nutrition you need to stay healthy. Most people take in food orally, which means through your mouth. If you can't get enough nutrition in through your mouth, your medical team may decide you need enteral feeding. Enteral feeding gives your body nutrition through a feeding tube into your stomach.

A feeding tube can go through your nose into your stomach, called a nasogastric tube or NGT. Or the tube could go through your skin straight into your stomach. This type of feeding tube is called a percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy or PEG. You may have a PEG if you have dysphagia, which is difficulty chewing or swallowing.

You may use a combination of ways to get the food and drink you need. How you eat will affect the nutrition supports you use.

Nutrition supports are a disability-related health supports.² We fund NDIS supports that relate to your disability. NDIS supports are the services, items, and equipment that can be funded by the NDIS.³

Learn more about [what we mean by disability-related health supports](#).

Disability-related nutrition supports may include:

- a dietitian to work with you to create a meal plan for your nutrition needs
- support to help you follow a meal plan
- enteral feeding and PEG equipment
- products to help you eat safely and get the nutrition you need, like food thickeners
- support to manage your enteral feeding or PEG.

Learn more about [what types of nutrition supports we may fund](#).

What help can you get to manage nutrition supports through the health system or other services?

The [Australian health system](#) provides nutrition support services that are available to everyone, whether or not they have a disability.

The government and community services must make sure all Australians, including people with disability, have access to their supports. We call these supports mainstream and community supports. The NDIS was set up to work alongside government and community services, not replace them.

Learn more about [Mainstream and community supports](#).

There may also be other specialist health services or private health insurance that is available to manage your health or treat a health condition. You will need to pay for these things yourself.

The health system helps support everyone to eat well through a wide range of healthy eating programs and information.⁴ This means there are nutrition supports for healthy eating which are available to everyone, whether they have a disability or not. For example, you may want advice on general healthy eating to improve your diet and be healthier. You could use information from the Australian Government like [Eat for Health](#). Or you may be able to get this support through the health system. For example, from your doctor. If another service is responsible for funding your nutrition supports, we can't fund them.⁵

We may fund nutrition supports if you need them because they're related to your disability. For example, if you have cerebral palsy you may struggle to maintain your weight and eat enough due to your disability. As the nutrition support is related to your disability, we may fund a dietitian to create a meal plan to help you maintain your weight.

Learn more in [Our Guideline – Disability related health supports](#).

What help can you get through Medicare?

Medicare helps all Australians with the costs of their health care.

If you're worried about your nutrition, you should talk to your doctor first. They can check your overall health and any medical issues. They may refer you for tests in the health system and other health services.

Medicare funds some allied health professional services for short term nutrition supports. However, if you need ongoing nutrition supports because of your disability, we may be able to fund them. We'll need evidence that you need these supports, such as reports or assessments from your doctor or dietitian.

If you need enteral feeding, your medical team will decide this when you're in hospital or another clinical health setting. The dietitian in your medical team will work out the enteral feeding you need. This includes the type, how much and how often. If you have a PEG, your medical team will work out the supports you need to look after it. This includes the area where the PEG enters your body. Medicare is responsible for funding nutrition supports while you're in hospital or in a clinical setting.⁶

Medicare is also responsible for your nutrition supports if you go back into hospital. For example, if you need your PEG removed or replaced.

You can continue accessing health care supports and services from Medicare, even when you're an NDIS participant.

Learn more about [Medicare](#).

What help can you get through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme?

The [Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme](#) funds a few nutritional supplements and enteral feeding formulas. If you can get what you need through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, we won't fund it.

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist to find out more about the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

How do we decide what nutrition supports we fund?

The laws for the NDIS determine what we can and can't fund. Things we can fund are called NDIS supports. You can use the funding in your plan to buy NDIS supports if they're related to your disability and are in line with your plan.⁷

Like other NDIS supports, we can only include nutrition supports in your plan if they meet all the [NDIS funding criteria](#).

Learn more about [how we decide what disability-related health supports we fund](#).

You can also learn more in our [Would we fund it guide – food and meal preparation](#).

What types of nutrition supports do we fund?

Nutrition supports that are NDIS supports⁸ include products, such as:

- nutritional supplements
- food and drink thickeners.

We may fund other supports relating to your nutrition, including:

- supports and services to manage your nutrition, such as nutritional meal plans and reviews by a dietitian, help for meal preparation or to follow a nutritional meal plan
- training for a support worker, family and friends to support you with your nutrition where appropriate.

Learn more about [help to manage your nutrition](#) and [help for meal preparation](#).

If you use enteral feeding or a percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy (PEG), we may fund products and equipment for this including:

- enteral feeding formula
- enteral feeding tubes and pumps
- feed bags or bottles
- syringes and giving sets to get the formula into the feeding tube.

We may also fund training for a support worker to help manage your feeding nutrition or PEG.⁹

Learn more about [who we will fund to provide your NDIS supports](#).

If we fund enteral feeding products in your plan, we'll tell you how much funding you have for this in your plan. Enteral feeding products will be included in your Core Consumables budget.

Learn more about [enteral feeding](#) and support for [enteral feeding and PEG](#).

Under NDIS laws, there are things we can't fund or provide.¹⁰

We don't fund nutrition supports for health issues that are not related to your disability support needs.

This includes nutrition supports for:

- weight loss
- eating disorders
- food allergies
- diabetes
- cardiovascular disease
- renal disease
- polycystic ovarian syndrome
- irritable bowel syndrome.

Learn more about [Supports that are not NDIS supports.](#)

What if you need nutritional supplements or enteral feeding?

Food is an everyday cost which most Australians pay for, whether they have a disability or not.¹¹ However, you may have trouble getting everything you need to stay healthy from food or drink because of your disability.

To help you get the nutrition you need, a suitably qualified health professional may prescribe nutritional supplements that you eat or drink. These supplements increase the amount of nutrition you get in your diet. We may be able to include funding for the prescribed nutritional supplements in your plan. The supplements need to be related to your disability-related health support needs.

You may use enteral feeding instead of eating food and drink orally. This could be the only way you get the nutrition you need. Or you could also eat some of your food and drink orally. We may include funding for enteral feeding formula in your plan. We may do this if you get all or part of your nutrition from enteral feeding. Your dietitian and medical team will work out the best way for you to get the nutrition you need.

We'll use reports from a suitably qualified health professional to work out if nutritional supplements or enteral feeding meet the [NDIS funding criteria](#) for you.

Learn [how to get nutrition supports like enteral feeding in your plan](#).

You can learn more about enteral feeding in our [Would we fund it guide – enteral feeding](#). If you have trouble swallowing because of your disability, you may need thickener products. Thickener products thicken food or fluids to help you to swallow, eat and drink safely. A speech pathologist will recommend the type and amount of thickener you need.

Learn more about [dysphagia supports](#).

What if you need help to manage your nutrition?

Your disability may mean you need help to manage your nutrition. If so, we may be able to fund this support. This can include a qualified dietitian to:

- create and review a nutritional meal plan for you
- train the people who support you in your nutrition support needs, such as a family member, support worker or friend.

If you have a PEG, we may fund a registered nurse to help with the care of it and your enteral feeding. We'll need evidence that tells us why you need a registered nurse and what they will do. Where we can, we'll generally fund a nurse to train a family member or a support worker in your individual nutrition support needs.

We may be able to fund a support worker to help you look after your PEG or enteral feeding. The support worker can help with cleaning your PEG and the area where it enters your body. We may also be able to fund a support worker to help with meal preparation if your disability means you can't do this yourself.

Learn more in [What if you need help to prepare meals?](#)

We can only fund these supports if they meet all the [NDIS funding criteria](#).

What if you need help to prepare meals?

Some people may need support to understand healthy eating or to prepare healthy food due to their disability. Some people may need support with both. This could be because of physical, cognitive, or psychosocial disability.

Your family, friends or carers may be able to help you prepare meals in line with your meal plan. If not, we may fund support to help you.

You can get this support from:

- a disability support worker
- meals that are prepared and delivered to you.

Disability support worker

A support worker can help you with your daily living tasks, including meal planning, shopping, and meal preparation.

This funding will be part of your core budget. We'll only include funding for a support worker in your plan if:

- you can't do these tasks independently because of your disability
- it's not reasonable to expect friends and family to support you
- your friends and family aren't able to support you.¹²

A support worker can help you to build your skills so you can start to plan and prepare more of your own meals.

Prepared and delivered meals

You may need to access prepared and delivered meals for a limited time. You can use your funding for meal preparation supports flexibly to pay for a pre-prepared and delivered meal service.

Learn more about using [your meal preparation supports flexibly](#).

For us to include funding in your plan, the support for meal preparation must meet all the [NDIS funding criteria](#). Generally, we'll fund supports that will help you build the skills to do these tasks by yourself over time. However, we know some participants may always need help with meal preparation.

Working out funding for meal preparation

To work out how much meal preparation funding to include in your plan, we'll think about:

- what supports you currently have to prepare meals

- how much time a support worker would need to help you to prepare meals. If we include this support to help you become more independent, this will usually reduce over the length of your plan.
- whether you are expecting any changes where your friends, carers or current support workers will be unable to help prepare meals for a period of time
- what participants with a similar situation to you have in their plan.

We'll also think what programs are available in the community to help you prepare meals.

If other supports in your plan already help you with meals, we generally won't include funding for help with meal preparation. Other supports which help with your meals could include:

- supported independent living
- assistive products for food preparation
- training and development of shopping and meal preparation skills
- assistance with daily living tasks.

When we work out how much meal preparation funding to include in your plan, we won't include the cost of food or ingredients. Food is an everyday living cost for everybody, whether they have a disability or not.¹³ You'll need to pay for the food yourself.

How can I use my meal preparation support flexibly?

You can only use funding from your core budget for support with meal preparation if it meets the [NDIS funding criteria](#) and we include it in your plan. We'll tell you how much of your core supports you can use for meal preparation. You need to spend your NDIS funding as described in your plan¹⁴, but you have some flexibility over how you spend your core budget and which providers you get your supports from.

You'll need to think about the best way to use the funding in your plan. If we include funding for meal preparation so you can build your skills in planning and preparing healthy meals, you'll need to buy supports that help you do this. You may choose to use funding in your core budget for a support worker to help you prepare meals or shop for groceries. If you only buy meal delivery, this won't help you build your skills. We'll talk to you about how your supports have helped you build your skills when we reassess your plan.

Occasionally, there may be a short-term change to your situation. For example, if:

- you are diagnosed with an infectious disease which means you need to isolate or reduce your contact with others
- the people who usually support you to prepare meals are unavailable for a short period of time. For example, if family members who help you go into hospital
- you have been recently discharged from hospital or are recovering from an illness and need temporary nutrition support while you arrange help from support workers
- you can't find someone else to help you prepare meals during these periods.

In these situations, you may need to get support for meal preparation in a different way. As your funding is flexible, you may decide to use it to have meals prepared and delivered for a limited time instead.

You can't use your funding to cover the cost of food or ingredients. We can only fund the preparation, and delivery supports you need due to your disability support needs. Food and ingredients are an everyday living cost for everybody, whether they have a disability or not.¹⁵

Providers may ask you to pay for the food and ingredients before the meals are prepared and delivered. You need to ask providers to separate the cost of food from the total cost when you discuss the total cost for meal preparation and delivery.

We allocate funding based on the actual cost of the food preparation and delivery component of offsite delivered food, not as a proportion of the overall cost.

If you use the funds in your core budget flexibly to purchase meal preparation and delivery, you can claim the cost of:

- meal preparation
- meal delivery.¹⁶

We won't fund the cost of food or ingredients. Food is an everyday living cost for everybody, whether they have a disability or not.¹⁷ You'll need to pay for the food yourself.

When considering a provider, you should ask whether the meals provided are meeting the standards of the [Australian Dietary Guidelines](#).

To learn more, speak to your my NDIS contact, support coordinator or recovery coach.

You may not have funding for meal preparation in your plan. If you don't and use your core funding for a support worker to help prepare meals or for meal delivery, it's likely you'll run out of funding. We won't add extra funding to your plan if this happens. To learn more about how to get the most out of your plan, go to [Our Guideline – Your plan](#).

Example

Emma is getting out of hospital following surgery and will not be able to prepare her own meals for a month. Emma's friend suggests she gets a food delivery service through a popular App.

This would not be an NDIS support as the food component is not split from the preparation and delivery costs.

Instead, Emma works with the dietitian at the hospital to organise for a food delivery service for the month. Emma chooses her meals and pays for the food component of the service. Emma uses her NDIS funding for the preparation and delivery.

Plan management

If your plan is managed by us, you'll only be able to use a registered provider to arrange a support worker to help you at home, or to have meals prepared and delivered.

If your plan is self-managed or plan-managed, you can choose to use either a registered or unregistered provider to deliver this support.

If your nutrition support needs change significantly, you should get in contact with us. Let us know about new reports or assessments you have. If we decide your plan isn't meeting your needs, we can do a [plan reassessment](#).

How do you get nutrition supports in your plan?

When we think about what nutrition supports to include in your plan, we'll also look at what other supports you get through the health system and other [mainstream and community supports](#). Your my NDIS contact, support coordinator or recovery coach will work with you and other services to help you get the support you need.

Once we've identified the supports and decided they meet the [NDIS funding criteria](#), we'll include the description and funding for the NDIS support in your plan.

Learn more about [how we include the reasonable and necessary supports in your plan](#).

If your situation has changed, or, you think your current plan doesn't have enough funding for the nutrition supports you need, you can ask for a change to your plan.¹⁸

Learn more about [changing your plan](#).

Do you need to give us evidence for nutrition supports?

Yes. To get nutrition supports in your plan, you need to give us evidence which helps us understand the disability-related supports you need. Talk to your my NDIS contact or support coordinator to work out what evidence we need. Learn more about the [evidence we need before we create or change your plan](#).

This could be a detailed report from your dietitian which includes any nutritional meal plans for you. Or it could be a report from another suitably qualified health professional which explains why you need a nutrition support.

Your dietitian can use our [Nutrition and Dysphagia Assistive Technology assessment template](#) or write their own report.

We'll also ask you about your nutrition support needs. We'll want to know what supports you currently use and how often you use them. We'll also ask you who provides the supports. For example, family and friends, a support worker or dietitian. We may also ask if you're expecting any change in who provides your supports.

You can tell us about any disability-related nutrition supports you may need but aren't using. For example, if you expect there will be a change in your carer arrangements.

We use all of this information to decide if your nutrition supports meet the [NDIS funding criteria](#). If they do, we'll work out the amount of disability-related nutrition support to include in your plan.

You can give us any new information or evidence about your support needs when you get it, or any time we talk with you.

Your nutrition supports will need to be regularly reviewed to make sure they continue to meet your individual nutrition needs. Your dietitian will recommend how often they will review your nutrition. For each review, we may fund a dietitian to reassess and update your nutrition plan.

What happens once you have nutrition supports in your plan?

Once you have nutrition support funding in your plan you can use it to get the nutrition products or help you need. Your plan will describe how you can use your funding to get nutrition supports. We'll also talk to you at your plan meeting.

If you need help to use the funding, talk to your my NDIS contact, support coordinator, or recovery coach.

Learn more in [Our Guideline - Your plan](#).

Your provider will need to make sure they or their workers have the current skills and knowledge to provide the supports you need.

What if you don't agree with our decision?

If we decide nutrition supports don't meet the [NDIS funding criteria](#), we can't include them in your plan.

We'll explain our decision and give you written reasons why we made the decision.¹⁹ You can [contact us](#) if you'd like more detail about the reasons for our decision.

If you don't agree with a decision we make about nutrition supports, you can ask for an internal review of our decision.²⁰

You'll need to ask for an internal review within 3 months of getting your plan.²¹

Learn more about [reviewing our decisions](#).

Reference list

- ¹ NDIS Act s 34(1)(aa).
- ² NDIS (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1)(NDIS Supports) Transitional Rules 2024 sch 1 item 16.
- ³ NDIS Act 2013 s10.
- ⁴ NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013 r 7.5(b).
- ⁵ NDIS Act 2013 s 10(c4)-(5).
- ⁶ NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r 7.5(b).
- ⁷ NDIS Act 2013 s 34(1)(f).
- ⁸ NDIS Act 2013 s 10.
- ⁹ NDIS (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1)(NDIS Supports) Transitional Rules 2024 sch 1 item 16.
- ¹⁰ NDIS Act 2013 s 10(4) - (9), NDIS (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1)(NDIS Supports) Transitional Rules 2024.
- ¹¹ NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r 5.1(d).
- ¹² NDIS Act 2013 s 34(1)(e).
- ¹³ NDIS Act 2013 s 10, NDIS (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1)(NDIS Supports) Transitional Rules 2024 sch 2 item 3.
- ¹⁴ NDIS Act 2013 s 46(1).
- ¹⁵ NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r 5.1(d).
- ¹⁶ NDIS (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1)(NDIS Supports) Transitional Rules 2024 sch 1 item 23.
- ¹⁷ NDIS Act 2013 s 10, NDIS (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1)(NDIS Supports) Transitional Rules 2024 sch 2 item 3.
- ¹⁸ NDIS Act ss47A;48.
- ¹⁹ NDIS Act s100(1).
- ²⁰ NDIS Act s 100.
- ²¹ NDIS Act s 100(2).