

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What is the IDDSI framework?**

The International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) was founded in 2013 with the goal of developing new global standardised terminology and definitions to describe texture modified foods and thickened liquids used for individuals with dysphagia of all ages, in all care settings, and all cultures. The guidelines have been developed by a panel of experts and are based on new, more rigorous testing methods to improve the quality and objectivity of dysphagia diet and fluid descriptors.

This year, the Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists (RCSLT) and the British Dietetic Association (BDA) have recommended that all services involved in dysphagia care across the UK adopt the new IDDSI framework between April 2018 and April 2019. All thickener and dysphagia diet producers are therefore going to be adopting the IDDSI framework in their products and labelling by April 2019. It is therefore imperative that we follow suit to ensure patient safety and consistency across ESNEFT.

### **When will the changes come into effect?**

All SLT services across ESNEFT will begin to adopt the IDDSI framework within dysphagia care plans for fluids & foods from October 2018. This is mainly because most of the thickening products are going to be changing their labels and scoop sizes in line with IDDSI by April 2019. It was decided that it would be easier and safer for the CCGs to change the first line formulary product to Nutilis Clear at the same time.

There may, of course, be some crossover during the transition period but we are asking all MDT colleagues and care providers to be extra vigilant during this time and to bear with us. We are trying to make our communications as clear as possible to avoid any confusion.

### **Why has Nutilis Clear been adopted as the first line thickener in the prescription formulary?**

The reason for the move over to Nutilis Clear is multifactorial. Firstly, Nutilis Clear is one of the new generation “gum based” thickeners. These have recently begun to replace traditional “starch based” thickeners on the market as they are considered more stable. The role of salivary amylase is to break down starch during the chewing process; therefore when starch comes into contact with saliva it begins to break down. This poses a risk, particularly for patients with excessive salivation or those being fed fluids via teaspoon.

Starch based thickeners are also known to leave an increased amount of residue in the

pharynx post-swallow which poses an increased risk for patients with weaker pharyngeal peristalsis of aspiration after swallowing. Finally, starch based thickeners do not mix to a consistent level of thickness across different types of drinks. For instance, 2 scoops in tea or coffee will be different to 2 scoops in water. The new, rigorous testing methods used to develop the IDDSI framework have further highlighted this inconsistency. When products were evaluated during a recent procurement process by SLT Specialists across ESNEFT emphasis was placed on sourcing of a product which is less variable and as such safer for patients.

### **What about other gum based thickeners?**

The choice to adopt Nutilis Clear rather than other gum based thickeners has been in response to SLT evaluation and positive feedback we have received from other Trusts. Other gum based thickeners on the market are mixed slightly differently to Nutilis Clear and traditional starch based thickeners in that they require the powder to be placed in a clean, dry cup before adding the fluid. Some patients and providers, as well as our partners in acute services have found this to be a barrier as it adds additional mess and time and risk of being the wrong consistency if not mixed correctly. Nutilis Clear is added to the drink either before or after the fluid and is therefore simpler to mix safely and correctly.

**Nutilis Clear has also been found to be the most cost effective product per drink when compared with all starch and gum based thickeners on the market at the current time.**

### **What if I want to prescribe a different product?**

Our Speech & Language Therapy colleagues are the experts in each type of thickener and what is likely to be the most suitable for each individual patient. Whilst Nutilis Clear is going to be the first line product in the community formulary, our SLT colleagues will have access to alternative thickeners on a patient by patient basis. We are asking prescribers to always be guided by their SLT colleagues in this matter and to address any queries relating to the recommendations being made for individual patients directly with their assessing SLT who will be happy to discuss any concerns and suggest alternatives as necessary.

### **Will the switch from a starch to gum based thickener have any impact on the patient?**

The use of a starch based thickener may have caused the patient to become constipated, therefore be mindful that the patient may experience some episodes of loose stools for a short time and consider the use of any laxatives.

### **What about Acute services?**

We are working closely with our partners in acute services to try to ensure that communication regarding diet and fluid descriptors is as clear as possible for all patients across pathways. When patients are admitted to hospital please check patient discharge summaries carefully for information about whether a patient's prescription needs to be reviewed again once they are discharged back home and make any necessary changes to repeat prescriptions using the Nutilis Clear prescribing guide provided with this communication.