

# Thickening of Fluids by Nurses

Please note this DST is to be used with the specific product “Resource ThickenUp Clear™”

\*\*\*DO NOT use this DST until the product is available at your site\*\*\*

## Site Applicability

All VCH and PHC Acute Settings

## Practice Level

Setting	Profession	Basic Skill	Advanced Skill (requiring additional <a href="#">education</a> )
All VCH and PHC Acute Sites	Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), Registered Psychiatric Nurse (RPN), Registered Nurse (RN)		Thickening fluids using the International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) Syringe Flow Test to assess appropriate thickness
All VCH and PHC Acute Sites	Registered Dietitian (RD), Speech -Language Pathologist (SLP), Occupational Therapist (OT)	Thickening fluids using the International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) Syringe Flow Test to assess appropriate thickness	

## Education

- Education on assessing thickness of thickened fluids by use of syringe flow test by reviewing this DST.

## Requirements

- A provider order is required for nurses to modify the diet texture and/or fluid thickness for [dysphagia](#) provider.
- If a nurse has a concern about a patient’s ability to swallow based on clinical presentation or swallowing screen, initiate NPO for the patient, notify the Most Responsible Provider (MRP), and notify dietician, and SLP or dysphagia-trained OTs (depending on the site and unit).
- NPO requires an order (VCH: [See Nothing by Mouth \(NPO\) – Procedure](#)). Orders should be obtained to address patient hydration, medications, and nutrition of patients who are NPO.
- If a nurse modifies the thickness of a fluid for [dysphagia](#), they must use the International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) Syringe Flow Test described below to check for consistency of the fluid thickness to ensure it is appropriate.

## Need to Know

- Dysphagia is defined as difficulty in maneuvering, chewing and/or swallowing food and/or liquid.
- Nurses **screen** for possible swallowing difficulties and other evidence of dysphagia (Cerner Sites refer to “Adult Swallowing Screen” Powerform). Formal dysphagia assessments are completed by SLPs or dysphagia-trained OTs (depending on the site and unit), who determine an appropriate treatment plan which may include modification to a patient’s diet texture or fluid thickness.
- There is an increased risk of aspiration and other negative outcomes if liquids provided to the patient differ (too thick or too thin) from the ordered thickness.
- Whenever possible, pre-thickened fluids provided by food services are used. Pre-thickened fluids provide the best consistency to match the thickness ordered.
- If a patient wishes to consume a fluid beverage that is not pre-thickened by food services, the nurse may thicken the liquid to the appropriate ordered thickness.
- To minimize the risk of unintended outcomes from thickener use (e.g. interaction, unexpected behaviour of product) use only VCH approved thickener.
- Use of thickening agents with liquid medications can affect medication action including absorption. Confer with the provider and/or pharmacy regarding liquid medications, and if other forms (e.g. tablet) of the medications may be more appropriate.

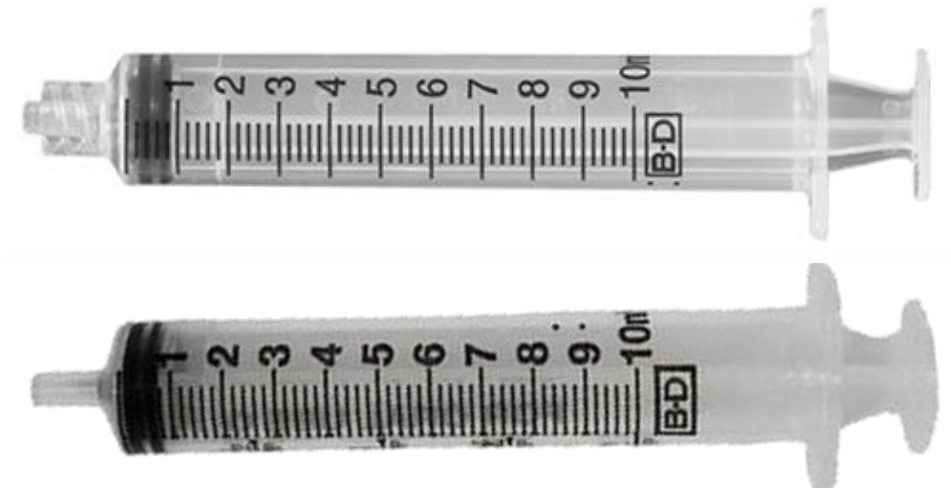
## Equipment and Supplies

- Fluid
- Timer
- Resource ThickenUp Clear™

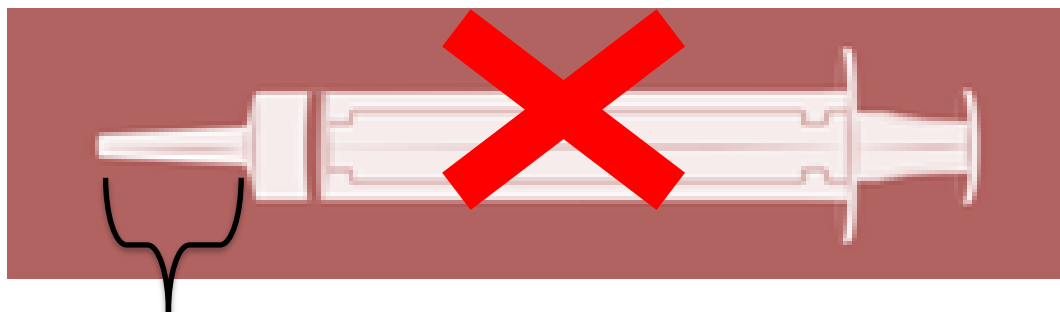


- 2 x 10mL syringes  
**NOTE:** Use only a 10mL syringe of the same dimensions as shown below. A different length or diameter of syringe will not produce an accurate result. A luer lock or slip tip syringe may be used.

## To Scale



**DO NOT** use a catheter tip syringe as it will produce an inaccurate result



Catheter tip syringes have a long AND tapered end

## Procedure

### Assessment

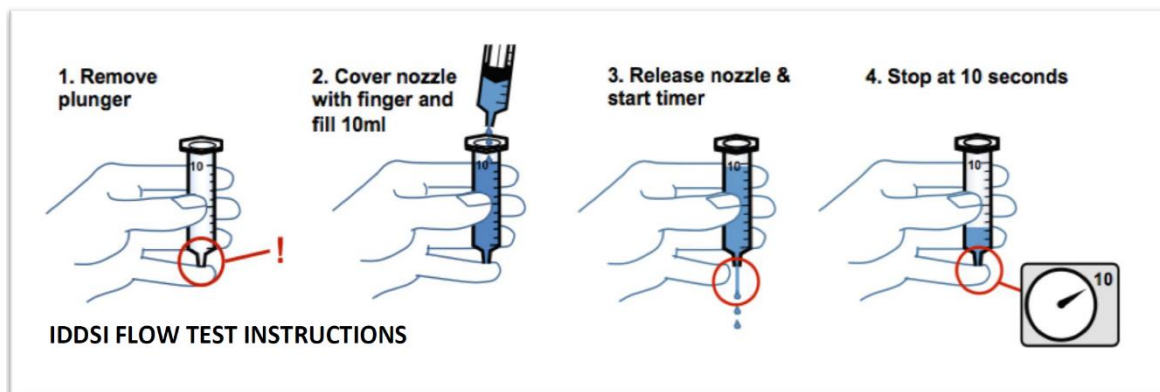
- Nurses first ensure that a suitable pre-thickened fluid is not available from food services.
- Nurses refer to the provider's order (non-Cerner Sites) or Diet/Nutrition orders screen (Cerner Sites) to determine required fluid thickness:
  - Nectar Thick/Mildly Thick 2; \*OR\*
  - Honey Thick/Moderately Thick 3

This material has been prepared solely for use at Providence Health Care (PHC) and Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH). PHC and VCH accept no responsibility for use of this material by any person or organization not associated with PHC and VCH. A printed copy of this document may not reflect the current electronic version.

## Steps

- If it is deemed that the nurse needs to thicken the patient's preferred beverage, the nurse follows the instructions on the single serving packet of Resource ThickenUp Clear™ to thicken the patient's beverage to the prescribed thickness.
- Do not add thickening agent to a product that comes from food services pre-thickened.
- For any item a nurse has thickened, perform the IDDSI Syringe Flow Test (described below) prior to giving the item to the patient to ensure it matches the ordered thickness.
- Perform hand hygiene.
- Obtain 2 (two) X 10 mL slip tip or luer lock syringes. Remove plunger from one syringe. Draw up at least 10 mL of thickened fluid into other syringe with plunger.
- While covering nozzle end of syringe without plunger, transfer contents of the first syringe into the syringe without the plunger to the 10 mL line.
- Remove finger from nozzle and start timer (watch with second hand or timer on cell phone can be used).
- At 10 seconds, replace a finger over the nozzle and record how much fluid remains in the syringe.
- Compare the results of the test with the corresponding consistency in the table below.
- Beverage should be provided to the patient to consume as soon as possible as it is unsafe to store food at room temperature for greater than two hours.
- Discard any unused portion, as fluid thickness may change over time when in contact with saliva.

## IDDSI Flow Test: [Video](#)



Results of Syringe Flow Test Quantity left in Syringe after <b>10 seconds</b>	Corresponding Consistency (IDDSI Thickness)
4 to 8 mL	Nectar Thick/Mildly Thick 2
8 to 10 mL	Honey Thick/Moderately Thick 3

**NOTE:** If the results of the syringe flow test fall outside the requirements of the ordered thickness continue to adjust thickness until they match

## Related Documents

### Guidelines

#### VCH:

- [Dysphagia Management](#)
- [Nothing by Mouth \(NPO\) – Procedure](#)

#### PHC:

- [Dysphagia Management – Acute Care](#)

## References

International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (2019).

[https://iddsi.org/IDDSI/media/images/Complete\\_IDDSI\\_Framework\\_Final\\_31July2019.pdf](https://iddsi.org/IDDSI/media/images/Complete_IDDSI_Framework_Final_31July2019.pdf)

International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative: IDDSI Testing Methods

<https://iddsi.org/framework/food-testing-methods/>

IDDSI. (2020, May 28). *IDDSI flow test instructions* [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=--KHFRqI39M>

<b>First Released Date:</b>	22-June-2022	
<b>Posted Date:</b>	22-June-2022	
<b>Last Revised:</b>	01-June-2022	
<b>Last Reviewed:</b>	01-June-2022	
<b>Approved By:</b> <i>(committee or position)</i>	PHC	VCH
	<b>Endorsed By:</b> Professional Practice Standards Committee	<b>Endorsed By:</b> (Regional SharePoint 2nd Reading) Health Authority Professional Specific Advisory Council Chairs (HAPSAC) Health Authority Interprofessional Advisory Council Chairs (HAIAC) VCH Operations Directors VCH Professional Practice Directors Regional Pharmacy and Therapeutics <b>Final Sign Off:</b> Vice President, Professional Practice and Chief Clinical Information Officer, VCH
<b>Owners:</b> <i>(optional)</i>	PHC	VCH
	Practice Consultant, Professional Practice, VCH	<b>Developer Lead:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dietician Practice Leader, Professional Practice – Allied Health, VA</li> <li>• Nursing Initiatives Lead, Professional Practice – Nursing, VA</li> </ul> <b>Development Team Members</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Educator, Professional Practice Vancouver Acute</li> <li>• Practice Leader SLP (Vancouver), Professional Practice</li> <li>• Practice Leader SLP (Richmond and Interim Vancouver), Professional Practice</li> <li>• Practice Coordinator OT, Professional Practice</li> </ul>

This material has been prepared solely for use at Providence Health Care (PHC) and Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH). PHC and VCH accept no responsibility for use of this material by any person or organization not associated with PHC and VCH. A printed copy of this document may not reflect the current electronic version.