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# Overview of BC Provincial and Federal Nutrition Benefits Programs

## BC Provincial Nutrition Benefits Programs

Provincial nutrition benefits are part of Health Supplements and Programs available through the BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. Delivered through the BC Employment and Assistance (BCEA) Program, the Ministry provides recipients of [income assistance](#), [disability assistance](#) and [hardship assistance](#) with access to the following nutrition-related benefits:

- Short-term Nutritional supplements, including Infant formula
- Diet supplements
- Monthly nutritional supplement
- Tube feed supplement
- Natal supplement

Find information on eligibility and application processes at:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/health-supplements-and-programs/>

Find rate amounts for provincial nutrition benefit programs at:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/bc-employment-and-assistance-rate-tables/health-supplements-and-programs-rate-table>

Learn more about provincial nutrition benefits programs below.

### A. Nutritional Supplements

#### Policy:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/health-supplements-and-programs/nutritional-supplements>

## Nutritional Supplement (Short Term)

Clients receiving *income assistance, disability assistance or hardship assistance* are eligible for up to three (3) months of calorie supplementation (for example, Boost® or Ensure®) to recover from:

- surgery
- severe injury
- serious disease
- side effects of medical treatment

Nutritional supplements are not provided where they would be strictly used as a food replacement.

**To apply:** Written confirmation must be given by a physician, nurse practitioner or registered dietitian. The documentation must include the diagnosis and reason the product is required, the name of the product required, the amount of product required, a price quote for the product, and the expected duration of need (up to a maximum of 3 months). This information must be sent to the client's Income Assistance Office.

## Infant Formula

Clients receiving *income assistance, disability assistance or hardship assistance* may be eligible for:

- regular infant formula during their child's first 12 months if:
  - the nutritional needs of the infant cannot be met through breastfeeding OR
  - the infant is at risk from contracting a disease through breastfeeding
- specialized infant formula for a child with a medical condition that requires specialized formula to treat the condition

**To apply:** Written confirmation must be given by a physician, nurse practitioner, registered dietitian or registered midwife. The documentation must include the name of the product required, the amount of product required, and the expected duration of need. This information must be sent to the client's Income Assistance Office.

## B. Diet Supplements

### Policy:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/health-supplements-and-programs/diet-supplements>

Clients receiving *income assistance, disability assistance or hardship assistance* are eligible to apply for a diet supplement to help meet costs of following a special diet. The maximum amount (per month) for each diet or medical condition is:

- Sodium restricted diet; \$15.00
- Diabetes; \$60.00
- Kidney dialysis; \$50.00
- Gluten-free diet; \$65.00
- Dysphagia diet; \$65.00 and may also receive \$50.00 toward purchase of a blender
- Ketogenic diet; \$65.00
- Low phenylalanine (PKU) diet; \$65.00
- Cystic fibrosis; \$80.00
- High protein diet; \$65.00 and may also receive \$50.00 toward purchase of a blender.
  - Clients needing a high protein diet must have a diagnosis of one of the following:
    - cancer requiring nutritional support during radiation, chemotherapy, surgical therapy or ongoing medical treatment
    - chronic inflammatory bowel disease (Crohn's, Ulcerative Colitis)
    - HIV/AIDS
    - chronic bacterial infection
    - tuberculosis
    - hyperthyroidism

- osteoporosis
- hepatitis B or C

Note: If a person has more than one of the above medical conditions, the person may receive only the amount of the highest diet benefit for which they are eligible.

**To apply:** Written confirmation must be provided by a physician, nurse practitioner or registered dietitian. The documentation must include the specific medical condition, the diet required, and the expected duration of need. This information must be sent to the client's Income Assistance Office.

### C. Monthly Nutritional Supplement (MNS)

#### Policy:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/health-supplements-and-programs/monthly-nutritional-supplement> (includes MNS application form)

Clients who have a *Persons with Disabilities (PWD)* designation and who are receiving *disability assistance* may be eligible to apply for the monthly nutritional supplement. Clients should contact their Income Assistance Office for information and forms. A physician, nurse practitioner or registered dietitian must complete the application form to confirm in writing, all of the following:

- The client has a severe medical condition causing a chronic, progressive deterioration of health, and as a result the client displays two or more of the following symptoms:
  - malnutrition
  - underweight status
  - significant weight loss
  - significant muscle mass loss
  - significant neurological degeneration
  - significant deterioration of a vital organ, and/or
  - moderate to severe immune suppression

- To alleviate these symptoms, the client requires one or both of the following:
  - additional food/nutritional items to supplement a regular diet, and/or
  - vitamins and minerals
- Failure to obtain these items will result in imminent danger to the person's life.

The MNS will only be provided if the client's *family unit* is not able to provide the items.

A client who receives the nutritional items portions of the MNS is *not eligible* to apply for other nutrition-related benefits, such as the diet supplement or nutritional supplement (short term). A client who only receives the vitamins and minerals portion of the MNS *is eligible* to apply for the diet supplement or nutritional supplement (short term).

## D. Tube Feed Supplement

### Policy:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/health-supplements-and-programs/tube-feed-supplement>

Clients receiving *income assistance, disability assistance or hardship assistance* are eligible to apply for a tube feed supplement if they are unable to take food orally or process food through their gastrointestinal system. The supplement can be provided for acute short-term or chronic long-term conditions. This supplement is available when no other government funded or other programs are available to the client.

**To apply:** Written confirmation must be provided by a physician, nurse practitioner or registered dietitian. The documentation must include that the person's primary source of nutrition must be obtained through tube feeding; the type of nutritional product required; the daily or monthly quantity of nutritional product required; the expected duration of the condition requiring tube feeding; and needed tube feeding supplies or equipment.

A person receiving the tube feeding supplement is not eligible to receive any other nutrition-related supplement.

## E. Natal Supplement

### Policy:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/health-supplements-and-programs/natal-supplement>

A monthly natal supplement is provided to pregnant recipients of *income assistance*, *disability assistance*, or *hardship assistance* and to families in receipt of assistance who have a dependent child 12 months of age or younger. This supplement is intended to assist in meeting extra costs associated with prenatal and postnatal expenses.

Clients are eligible for the natal supplement from the time pregnancy is confirmed to 12 months past the date of birth. Apply early as the benefit is not retroactive.

**To apply:** For pregnant persons, written documentation from a physician, nurse practitioner or registered midwife must be sent to the client's Income Assistance Office. Documentation must include confirmation of pregnancy and expected date of delivery. For families with an infant, only documentation confirming the child's age (i.e. birth certificate) is required.

### For Further Information

British Columbia Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

Call 1-866-866-0800 for help with income assistance services or find information at: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/social-development-poverty-reduction/ministry-contacts>

## BC At Home Program

The At Home Program provides medical products and supplies to support children and teens with a severe disability or complex health care needs to be cared for at home.

Children may qualify for tube feeding formula, fluid thickeners, and specialized nutrition products that directly relate to the child's medical condition.

Find more information and learn how to apply at: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/child-behaviour-development/support-needs/complex-health-needs/at-home-program>

## **BC Home Enteral and Parenteral Nutrition Program**

The BC Home Enteral Nutrition (HEN) Program and the BC Home Parenteral Nutrition Program (HPN) provide support to people in British Columbia and the Yukon who have specialized nutrition needs due to gastrointestinal tract ("gut") problems. There are very specific application criteria for people who require intravenous (IV) nutrition. Find more information at:

BC Home Enteral Nutrition Program <http://www.bchomenutrition.org/home-enteral-nutrition.html>

BC Home Parenteral Nutrition Program <http://www.bchomenutrition.org/home-parenteral-nutrition.html>

## **BC First Nations Health Authority Health Benefits Program**

Current benefits include prescription drugs, medical supplies and equipment, mental health services, vision and eye care, medical transportation and dental/orthodontic care.

For information on the benefits, eligibility and services covered, visit;

- First Nations Health Authority <http://www.fnha.ca/benefits>, or
- call 1-855-550-5454, or
- email [HealthBenefits@fnha.ca](mailto:HealthBenefits@fnha.ca) , or
- ask in person at 1166 Alberni St, Room 701, Vancouver B.C.

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## Federal Nutrition Benefits Programs

### Jordan's Principle

Jordan's Principle helps First Nations children access speech therapy, educational supports, medical equipment, mental health services, and more. Find information about what's covered and who to contact at: <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1568396296543/1582657596387#sec2>

To request funding and get copies of forms, contact:

- British Columbia General Inquiry line, available Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm
  - 778-951-0716
- Jordan's Principle Call Centre, available 24 hours, 7 days a week
  - 1-855-JP-CHILD (1-855-572-4453)
  - Teletypewriter: 1-866-553-0554

### Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) Nutrition Benefits

Veterans may be eligible for coverage of tube feeding supplies and formula or caloric supplementation with oral nutritional supplements depending on the client's level of coverage. Eligibility criteria differ according to veteran classification and eligibility is assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Veterans who are part of the Veterans Independence Program (VIP) can also contact VIP for information on the Access to Nutrition program. The Access to Nutrition program may cover delivery of meals to a residence or transportation of a veteran to access a meal at a local community facility or restaurant.

Find information about the [Veterans Independence Program](https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/housing-and-home-life/help-at-home/veterans-independence-program) at: <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/housing-and-home-life/help-at-home/veterans-independence-program>

Contact Veterans Affairs Canada at:

- 1-866-522-2122
- Teletypewriter 1-833-921-0071
- Veterans Affairs Canada <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng>





## Additional Resources

For information and advice based on your specific food and nutrition needs and preferences, call **8-1-1** and ask to speak to a HealthLink BC dietitian.

For additional information, see the following:

- HealthLink BC [www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca) – Get medically approved non-emergency health information.

*These resources are provided as sources of additional information believed to be reliable and accurate at the time of publication and should not be considered an endorsement of any information, service, product or company.*



## Notes

### Distributed by:

Dietitian Services at HealthLinkBC (formerly Dial-A-Dietitian), providing free nutrition information and resources for BC residents and health professionals. Go to [www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca) or call **8-1-1** (anywhere in BC). Interpreters are available in over 130 languages.