

# Frequently Asked Questions on Nutrition and Ebola Virus Disease

(Plus other filovirus diseases such as Marburg Virus Disease and Lassa Fever):

## INTRODUCTION

A theme that has emerged consistently in interviews with professionals from past Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreaks is the difficulty in knowing how to provide nutritional care in Ebola Treatment Units (ETUs); particularly, what type of nutritional care is feasible and how it can be balanced with the other clinical demands of a high-risk zone.<sup>1</sup> The lack of research and evidence-based recommendations on the provision of nutritional care in ETUs has made it challenging to develop guidance on this topic. However, given the regular recurrence of EVD outbreaks, further practical guidance is needed to support health practitioners.

This series of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) is meant to provide guidance on the provision of nutritional care in ETUs where recommendations are currently lacking or to aid the implementation of existing recommendations.

**These FAQs could be relevant to other infectious diseases with clinical syndromes similar to Ebola that are managed in isolation facilities, particularly diseases caused by other filovirus' such as Marburg and Lassa.**

These FAQs are 'living' documents and will be updated when new recommendations and/or evidence become available.

The guidance provided in this series is based on WHO recommendations (where available) and other currently available evidence. In the absence thereof, this guidance is derived from:

- Guidance materials on nutritional care for patients in ETUs developed between 2014 and 2020 and comparative analyses of these materials.<sup>1,3,6–25,26,28,29,4,30</sup>
- Experiences captured from health practitioners who have worked in ETUs, particularly during the 2013–2016 EVD outbreak in West Africa and during more recent outbreaks between 2018 and 2020 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>1</sup>
- Guidance on nutritional support for comparable diseases or disease settings.

The contents of this FAQ series have been peer-reviewed by health practitioners working in ETUs (e.g., clinicians, nurses and nutritionists).

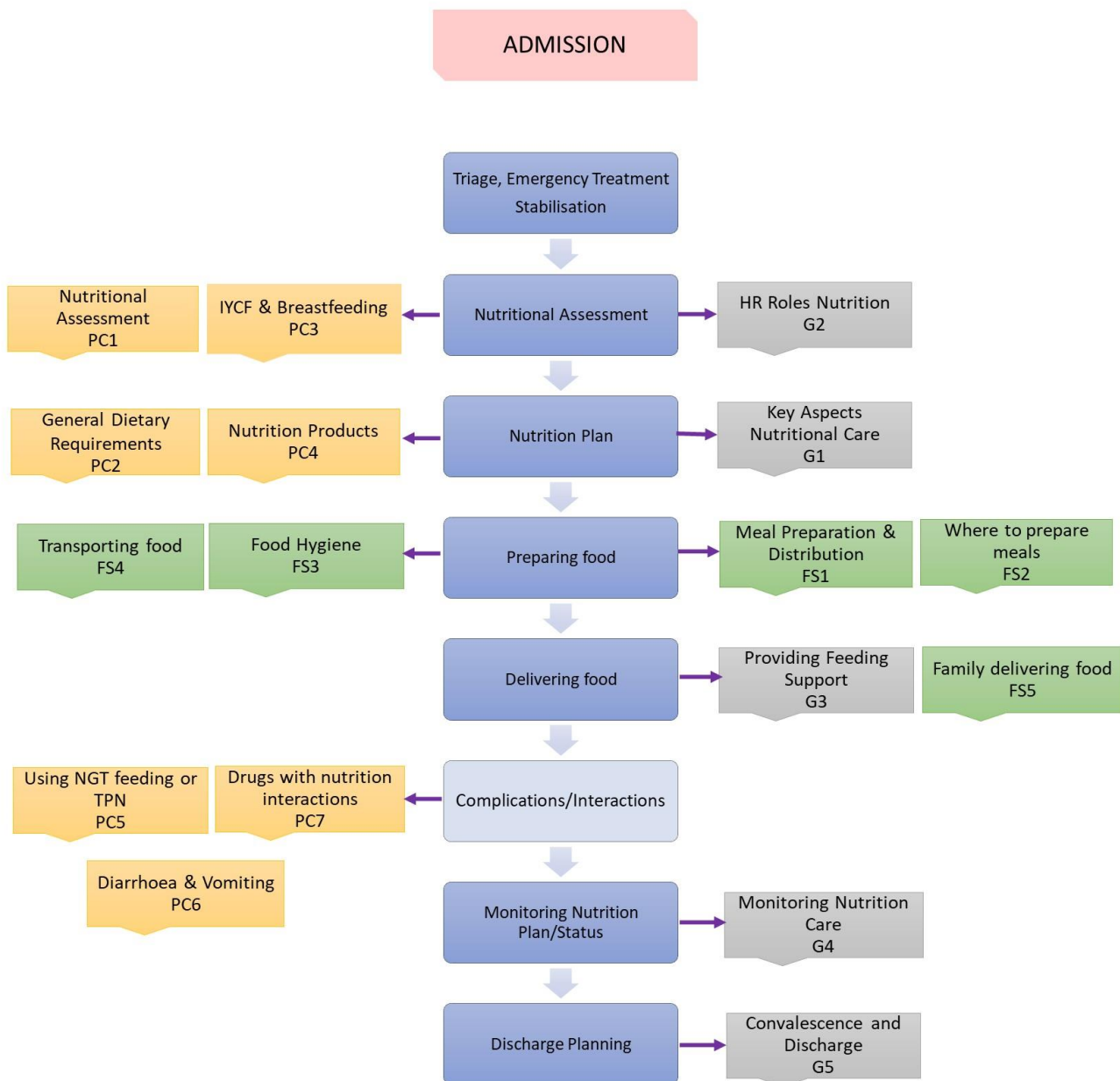
Although many aspects of nutritional care for ETU patients are universal, adjustments can be made according to context and the availability and accessibility of resources. The guidance presented in these FAQs responds to a relatively 'ideal situation', recognizing that this is not always feasible and that compromises are often necessary.

**Table 1** below summarizes the FAQs currently featured in the series. They have been grouped into three themes: General (G), Patient Care (PC), Food System (FS). Other FAQs are in progress and these documents will be updated when new information becomes available. **Figure 1** below summarises where in the patient journey these FAQs can be considered.

**Table 1. FAQ titles according to theme**

| <b>GENERAL</b>  |
|---|
| G1. What are the key aspects of nutritional care in ETUs?   |
| G2. What are the principal roles required for ensuring quality nutritional care in ETUs?  |
| G3. What special considerations should be taken to provide individual feeding support to ETU patients?                          |
| G4. How should nutritional care be monitored in an ETU?   |
| G5. What are the recommendations for addressing nutritional needs of convalescent patients upon ETU discharge?                  |
| <b>PATIENT CARE</b>   |
| PC1. How should a nutritional assessment be carried out in an ETU?  |
| PC2. What are general dietary recommendations and food suggestions for ETU patients?  |
| PC3. How should infant and young child feeding (including breastfeeding) be managed in ETUs?                                    |
| PC4. When and how should specialized nutrition products be used in ETUs?  |
| PC5. When should nasogastric tube feeding or total parenteral nutrition be used in ETUs?  |
| PC6. What are the dietary recommendations for ETU patients with diarrhoea or vomiting and subsequent electrolyte abnormalities? |
| PC7. What drugs have nutrition interactions in ETUs?  |
| <b>FOOD SYSTEM</b>  |
| FS1. How should meal preparation and distribution be managed in ETUs?   |
| FS2. Where should ETU meals be prepared?  |
| FS3. What measures should be taken to ensure proper food hygiene in ETUs?   |
| FS4. How should food be safely transported to and within ETUs?  |
| FS5. What instructions can be provided to families and friends who want to provide meals for an ETU patient?                    |

**Figure 1: The nutritional care patient journey through an ETU and where to consider using these FAQs**



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