

Oral nutritional supplements

Optimizing the appropriate use of prescribed oral nutritional supplements



Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group
Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust

Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS) provide essential nutrients, vitamins and minerals and may be recommended by your dietitian or doctor to help you to meet your nutrition and fluid requirements, help facilitate weight gain or to prevent further weight loss. The information below is to help you to get the most benefit out of your nutritional supplements. Please ask your dietitian or doctor if you need any further information.

- ONS should only be prescribed by your doctor once a **malnutrition screening assessment** has been carried out and **when you meet prescribing criteria**. This includes conditions such as short-bowel syndrome, malabsorption, inflammatory bowel disease, total gastrectomy, disease-related malnutrition and more.
- ONS are a **short-term intervention** to support a **clear goal** agreed with your dietitian or doctor. ONS will be **reviewed regularly** and discontinued when the agreed goals are met, or if they are no longer having a beneficial effect.
- **ONS should supplement, not substitute your diet**. They are designed for patients who cannot meet their nutritional requirements through oral intake alone. **Avoid using ONS as a meal replacement** – try to have between meals (mid-morning/mid-afternoon or before bed), or sip ‘little and often’ throughout the day.
- Store ONS in a cool, dry place. ONS can be kept open for 4 hours at room temperature or up to 24 hours in the fridge if you cannot finish it in one go. Most ONS taste best chilled.
- ONS should be used in combination with a **fortified diet**, high energy drinks & snacks. It is recommended that patients have two ONS a day (approx. 600kcal) to provide a therapeutic dose. Any less is unlikely to have a significant effect on weight gain. Please take the dose recommended by your healthcare professional.
- If you struggle to drink your ONS, **speak to your dietitian about recipes or tips** e.g. making them into a smoothie, jelly, adding to soup or a dessert. Different flavours and types can also be tried if tolerance is poor.
- If you have difficulty swallowing or have noticed deterioration in your swallow, ask your doctor to refer you to a speech and language therapist for assessment. Pre-thickened ONS can be trialled if necessary in patients with swallowing difficulties.
- Be sure to check all ONS for a use-by date and **check the ingredients list for allergens. Most ONS are not suitable for vegans as they are milk-based.**
- If you no longer consume or require your ONS, please let your GP know as soon as possible, to avoid wastage and unnecessary costs.

Did you know: Local research by Berkshire Dietitians showed that most patients and staff tend to prefer homemade milkshakes over powdered supplements. **Have you tried our tasty homemade milkshake? See the ‘Nourishing Drink’ hand-out.**



Think, Food First!