



Patient Information Leaflet: Oral Nutritional Supplements

What are Oral Nutritional Supplements?

- ❖ These are special drinks or foods for medical purposes - they are also known as sip feeds.
- ❖ They have been prescribed because you are experiencing one or all of the following: weight loss/ inability to maintain your weight/ poor appetite/ poor oral intake/ underweight / pressure sores.
- ❖ They are not intended as meal replacements – they are used to top up your dietary intake when your doctor is concerned about your nutritional status.
- ❖ They are intended to be taken for a short period of time until your oral intake and weight improves or stabilises.
- ❖ Your weight and oral intake should be monitored during this time.
- ❖ There are a number of different types but they are usually high calorie drinks that are either fruit juice or milkshake based, or savoury. They may be ready to drink or powder sachets that you make up to a drink.
- ❖ You will have already tried to improve your oral intake by changing the sorts of foods that you eat and the times that you eat but this has not resulted in sufficient improvement.

Your Prescription

- ❖ You will initially be given a starter pack or a small supply of them to ensure that you get on with them.
- ❖ You will normally be prescribed two drinks daily – this is called a therapeutic dose. Any less will not tend to show any significant benefit. This is why it is important that you have the full prescribed amount daily. If you are struggling to do this or struggling in any other way to tolerate them, please talk to your doctor.
- ❖ As long as your prescription states “order patient preference”, you can ask your pharmacist to order you different flavours, once you know which ones you prefer - or you can ask for a mix of flavours.
- ❖ If you are prescribed a powder sachet that you make up to a drink, make sure that you use whole/ full fat milk (*not* semi skimmed or skimmed milk or water). The sachet will show how much milk you need to add.
- ❖ You can store the unopened supplements in a cool place – they don’t have to be kept in the fridge.
- ❖ Once opened they can be at room temperature for up to 4 hours - after 4 hours any unused drink should be thrown away. If refrigerated once opened, they can generally be kept for up to 24 hours - refer to the outer product packaging for guidance in this respect.

How to Take Oral Nutritional Supplements

- ❖ They are intended to top up your normal food and drink intake not to replace it. See below for simple things that you can do to improve your appetite and oral intake. You should already have tried these for at least a month before starting the oral nutritional supplements. It is essential that you continue to follow this guidance (called *Food First*).
- ❖ People generally prefer to have the milkshake/fruit juice supplements chilled, rather than room temperature.
- ❖ It is essential that you take them in between meals – try to ensure a minimum of 2 hours after your last meal and before your next. If you take them too close to a mealtime/snack you may feel too full to eat or you may experience symptoms such as nausea and bloating and they will defeat the object of you taking them!
- ❖ Sip them slowly rather than drinking down in one go – they can make you feel nauseous if you drink them too quickly.
- ❖ If you have diabetes, you will have been prescribed a milkshake based drink (or soup) rather than fruit juice based. Some people worry that they will cause their blood glucose levels to rise dramatically but sipping them slowly helps to prevent this.
- ❖ If you have problems swallowing liquids and are recommended thickened drinks, there are special pre-thickened supplements available. If you are experiencing trouble swallowing, please tell your doctor so that they can consider a referral for a swallowing assessment first. You would then be referred to see a dietitian.

Simple Ways to Improve Dietary Intake (*Food First*):

- If you have a small appetite, eat little & often rather than large amounts in one go
- Have high calorie snacks & nourishing drinks in between meals
- Avoid low fat/low calorie foods
- Have whole milk (blue top) and full fat dairy produce
- Enrich/fortify your food and drinks
To savoury foods add cream/butter/cheese/mayonnaise/creamy sauces
****To sweet foods add cream/sugar/jam/ honey/ syrup/ evaporated milk/custard/ ice cream ** avoid adding sugary foods if you have diabetes**
- Fortified Milk Recipe: add 3-4 tablespoons of milk powder to a pint of whole (blue top) milk and use this in breakfast cereal/foods and drinks throughout the day
- If you find your appetite is better or you are more alert at certain times of the day, concentrate on eating & drinking the best that you can during these times – if you have a main meal choose a time best for you

