



# Oral Nutritional Supplements in the Community

## A patient's guide

### Why have I been referred to the community Dietitians?

You may have been referred to the community dietitians for one of the following reasons:

- You have been identified as being at high risk of malnutrition (not getting enough nutrients and becoming malnourished), and you need some advice on what to eat to help you stop losing more weight and also gain some weight.
- A health care professional has requested a review of your current oral nutritional supplement prescription.
- You have pressure ulcers and need some dietary advice about what you should be eating.

### Do I still need oral nutritional supplements?

- If you have a poor appetite, have recently lost a lot of weight or are having difficulty eating and/or drinking it is important to make sure that you are getting as much energy and protein from your food and drink as possible.
- You may also be prescribed oral nutritional supplements.
- Oral nutritional supplements provide additional nutrients, including protein and energy for people who are not getting enough nutrition through food alone.
- As oral nutritional supplements are licensed products, they can only be prescribed if you meet at least **two** of the criteria below. They are for short term use only (usually 3 months).

Criteria to identify if you are at high risk of malnutrition	Do I meet the criteria Y/N?
Body mass index of less than 18.5kg/m <sup>2</sup>	
A body mass index of less than 20kg/m <sup>2</sup> <u>AND</u> more than 5% unintentional weight loss in the last 3-6 months	
Unintentional weight loss of more than 10% in the last 3-6 months	



### **Disease Related Malnutrition**

- Short bowel syndrome
- Dysphagia (swallowing difficulties)
- Intractable malabsorption (a severe and ongoing inability to absorb nutrients from food, even with treatment)
- Pre-operative preparation of undernourished patients
- Inflammatory bowel disease
- Total gastrectomy (the complete removal of the stomach through surgery)
- Bowel fistulae (abnormal connections or passages between the intestines (bowels) and other organs or the skin)
- Disease related malnutrition (chronic/acute)
- Pressure Ulcers (any grade)

### **What happens if I do not meet the criteria for oral nutritional supplements?**

- If you do not meet any of the criteria above, your Dietitian will recommend that your GP stops your nutritional supplements.
- You may still need advice to help you maintain/gain weight. Your Dietitian will encourage you to follow a fortified diet (when extra nutrients, like vitamins or minerals, are added to food or drinks) using a 'Food First' approach.
- The 'Moving on from Supplements' document attached to this leaflet provides examples of food first approaches that can help you to maintain/keep your weight.

### **If I still need supplements which type can my GP prescribe?**

- In hospital, your Doctor or Dietitian may prescribe you oral nutritional supplements such as Ensure, Procal Powder, Calogen, Fortisip or Fresubin. These supplements are drinks which contain energy, protein, vitamins, and minerals.
- When you leave the hospital, you may be given 1 to 2 weeks' worth of these supplement drinks. They will help make sure you are getting the nutrients you need while you recover from your illness.
- When you are home, your community Dietitian will assess whether these supplement drinks need to continue to be prescribed by your GP. Once you are home your GP is likely to prescribe you a suitable alternative supplement drink which is more readily available, cost effective, have more calories and protein and many people prefer the taste. These could be Aymes Shake, Foodlink Complete or Altraplen Energy.



**X** These are the supplements which we are not allowed to prescribe for you to use at home

- Ensure Compact
- Ensure Plus
- Milkshake
- Ensure Plus Yogurt
- Ensure Plus Juice
- Fresubin
- Procal
- Fortisip
- Forticreme



**✓** These are the supplements that we are allowed to prescribe for you to use at home

- Foodlink Complete Powder
- Aymes Shake Powder
- Altraplen Energy



## How long will my prescription for nutritional supplements last?

- Your supplement prescription will continue for a maximum of three months, and you will be reassessed at your next appointment.
- If at your next appointment, you are no longer at high risk of malnutrition, your supplements will be stopped, and you can proceed with some of the 'food first' approaches attached to this leaflet.

## Further Information

Nutrition and Dietetics Community Team  
 Holloway Community Health Centre  
 11 Hornsey Street  
 London N7 8GG  
 Phone: 020 3224 4720



### Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or [whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net)

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please email [whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net). We will try our best to meet your needs.

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**Whittington Health NHS Trust**  
Magdala Avenue  
London  
N19 5NF  
Phone: 020 7272 3070  
[www.whittington.nhs.uk](http://www.whittington.nhs.uk)

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