

Title	Guideline for prescribing oral nutritional supplements for adults in primary care
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References	NICE (2006) CG32: Nutrition support for adults: oral nutrition support, enteral tube feeding and parenteral nutrition [Accessed 22.05.25] PrescQIPP Bulletin 261 [Accessed 22.05.25]
Associated guidance	Oral Nutritional Supplement (ONS) prescribing in end-of-life care Substance misuse and oral nutritional supplements
Consulted with	Community dietetic teams from ECCH, QEH and NCHC, NCHC LD dietitians, Dietetic Prescribing Steering Group (Feb 2022)
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Available online	Guideline for prescribing ONS in adults in primary care

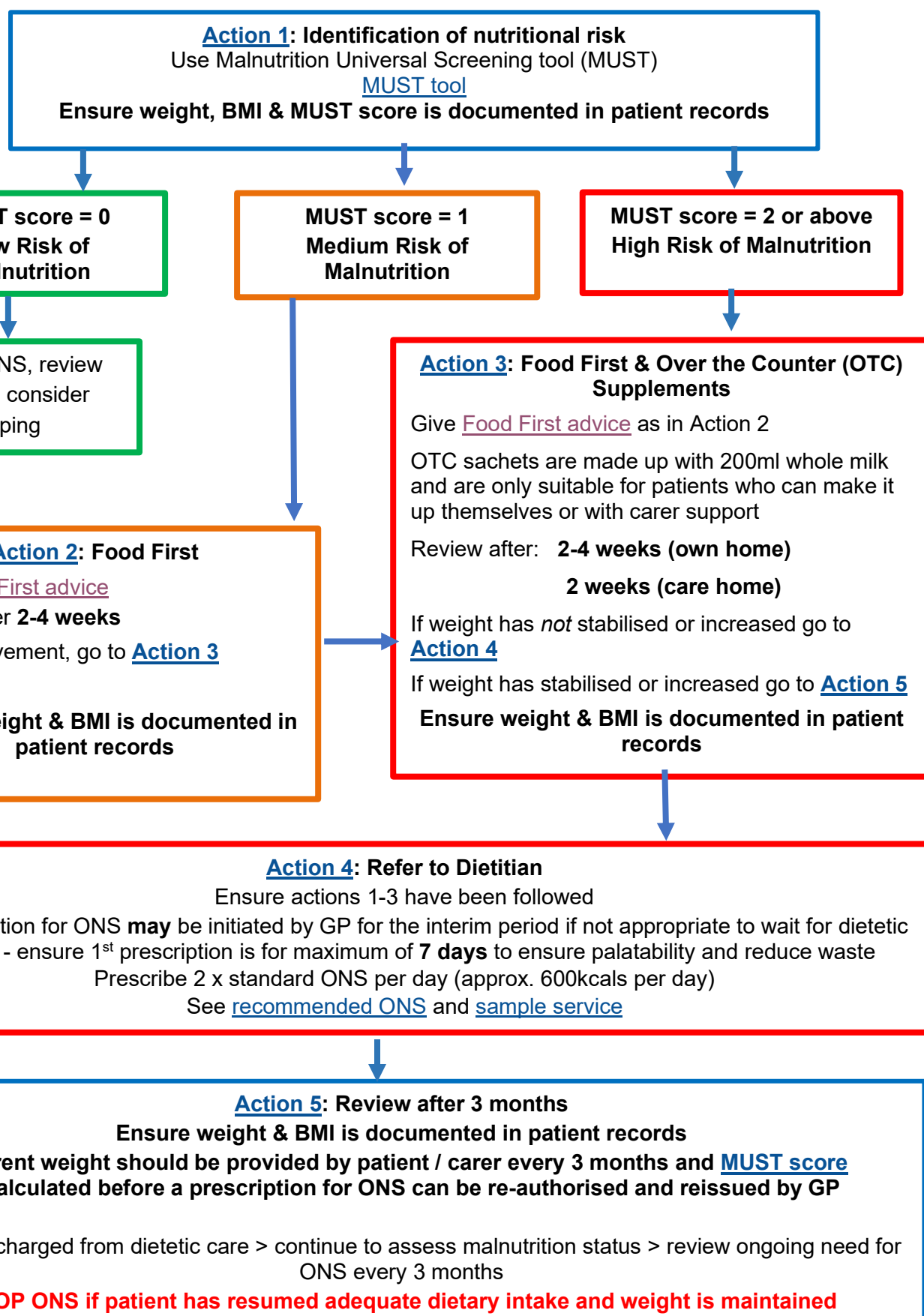
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For nutrition-related prescribing enquiries, please contact nwicb.dieteticqueries@nhs.net

Pathway for food fortification & use of oral nutritional supplements in adults



Notes for Actions 1-5 for the identification, treatment, and monitoring of malnutrition

Action 1: Identification of nutritional risk

- Complete [MUST](#) screening (based on [NICE \(2006\) CG32](#) definition of malnutrition).
- Please note MUST/BMI may not be accurate tools to assess nutritional risk in some groups:
 - People with learning disabilities: Other signs of malnutrition such as consistent unplanned weight loss, limited diet/avoiding whole food groups, and presence of dysphagia should be considered.
 - Medical conditions leading to fluid overload/ oedema.
- Consider dietary intake and assess underlying causes of malnutrition.
- Set and document realistic and measurable goals e.g. target weight, weight gain/maintenance, BMI, improved activities of daily living.

Action 2: Food First

- Encourage little and often i.e., small, frequent meals and snacks.
- Aim to increase energy intake by about 500kcal per day.
- 1 pint of **fortified milk**: 568ml/1 pint of full-cream (whole or Jersey) milk + 4 *heaped* tablespoons of dried skimmed milk powder (this provides approx. 600kcal and 40g protein) Use in hot drinks, cereal/ porridge, sauces, soups, and home-made milkshakes and smoothies.
- Two [Homemade Nourishing Drinks](#) of their choice per day, using fortified milk.
- Provide patient with nutrition support information available from Knowledge NoW:
 - [Eating well - A guide to help you gain or maintain your weight](#) or,
 - [Eating well – Ideas for plant-based alternatives](#) (includes recipes)
 - [Homemade Nourishing Drinks](#)
- Consider an over-the-counter (OTC) multivitamin and mineral supplement, such as an 'A-Z' type.

Action 3: Over-the-counter (OTC) ONS

Consider recommending OTC products such as Aymes® Retail milkshakes, Complan® milkshakes, Meritene Energis® milkshakes & soups, Nurishment® milkshakes.

Action 4: Prescribe ONS only if actions 1-3 have been followed / refer to dietitians

ONS can only be prescribed when ACBS criteria are met. The principal indication is 'disease-related malnutrition.' ONLY prescribe if urgent and it is not appropriate to wait for a dietetic review. Refer to community dietitians (ECCH, NCHC, or QEH) or a primary care dietitian (if employed at the GP Practice or PCN, and it is within their scope of practice).

For people with learning disabilities, please refer as follows:

- Norfolk - refer to the NCHC community dietitians & they will triage and forward to the learning disabilities specialist dietetic service as appropriate.
- Waveney - refer to ECCH community dietitians if MUST score ≥ 2 (NB: no specialist service)

Seek specialist review if person is prescribed thickeners for dysphagia - prescribed ONS should NOT be thickened.

Action 5: Review and discontinue ONS

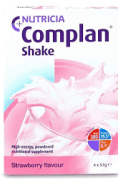
- Review 3 monthly to monitor progress (weight, BMI & MUST score), review goals, and check if ONS are still appropriate.
- Consider discontinuing ONS if: patient is non-compliant, goals of treatment are met, or if patient has a MUST score of 0.
- If the patient no longer has a clinical need for ONS but wishes to continue, advise patient to buy OTC products or homemade nourishing drinks (see Action 3).

Hospital discharge

Please do NOT continue prescription of ONS after a patient has been discharged from hospital unless they have been seen by dietetics and ONS have been specifically recommended.
Please check hospital discharge paperwork for recommendations and follow-up plan.

Choice of ONS

Please [order a sample pack](#) for all new ONS prescriptions to allow preferences to be determined.

First line Powdered ONS			
Patients/carers will require manual dexterity to reconstitute powders; consider 2 nd line ONS if this is not appropriate (see below). Suggested dose: 2 x 57g sachets daily between meals - see Prescribing Amounts .			
Aymes Shake (AYMES)	Complan Shake (Nutricia)	Foodlink Complete (Nutra)	Aymes ActaSolve Savoury (AYMES)
Nutritional values when powder is made up with 200ml whole milk			With 200ml water
 383kcal, 19g protein Presentation: 7 x 57g sachets, or 1.6kg tub (provides 28 servings) Flavours: Strawberry, chocolate, banana, vanilla, ginger, neutral	 380kcal, 15.8g protein Presentation: 4 x 57g sachets Flavours: Strawberry, chocolate, banana, vanilla, original	 383kcal, 19g protein Presentation: 7 x 57g sachets Flavours: Strawberry, chocolate, banana, vanilla, natural	 250kcal, 9.2g protein Presentation: 7 x 57g sachets Flavours: Chicken, potato & leek, vegetable
Second line Ready to drink Milkshake-style ONS			
Use ready-to-drink milkshake or yogurt-style ONS only if unable to make up powdered ONS. Suggested dose: 2 x bottles daily between meals - see Prescribing Amounts .			
Altraplen Energy (Nutra)	Aymes ActaGain 1.5 Complete (AYMES) (Previously Aymes Complete)	Fortisip Bottle (Nutricia) Use only if other second line ONS are unavailable	
 200ml carton 300kcal, 12g protein Flavours: Strawberry, chocolate, banana, vanilla	 200ml bottle 300kcal, 14g protein Flavours: Strawberry Burst, Double Chocolate, Banana Milkshake, Smooth Vanilla	 200ml bottle 300kcal, 11.8g protein Flavours: Strawberry, chocolate, banana, vanilla	

Second line
Compact ONS (smaller volume)

Compact ONS should only be prescribed if the patient is unable to tolerate large volumes.
First choice is **Aymes Shake Compact** or **Foodlink Complete Compact** (powder - make up with whole milk).
However, if patient is unable to tolerate large volumes AND is unable to make up powdered ONS, use a compact ready-to-drink ONS.
Suggested dose: 2 x 57g sachets or 2 x 125ml bottles daily between meals - see [Prescribing Amounts](#).

Aymes Shake Compact (AYMES) Powder made with 100ml whole milk	Foodlink Complete Compact Nualtra Powder made with 100ml whole milk	Altraplen Compact Nualtra
7 x 57g sachets 320kcal, 15g protein	7 x 57g sachets 318kcal, 15g protein	125ml bottle 320kcal, 12g protein
		
Flavours: Strawberry, chocolate, banana, vanilla, ginger, neutral	Flavours: Strawberry, chocolate, banana, vanilla, neutral	Flavours: Strawberry, banana, vanilla, hazel-chocolate

Juice-style / plant-based ONS

Juice-style ONS should usually only be prescribed if requested by a dietitian.

Most juice-style ONS contain milk protein, though they may be suitable for those who do not like milkshake-style drinks. However, Aymes ActaSolve Smoothie & Nualtra Foodlink Smoothie are plant-based & can be trialled as a first-line option. [Order samples](#)

Suggested dose: 2 x sachets daily between meals.

Aymes ActaSolve Smoothie (AYMES) The protein source is soy protein	Foodlink Smoothie (Nualtra) The protein source is soy protein
~300kcal & 10.7g protein.	287 kcal & 10g protein
Presentation 7 x 66g sachets (make up with 150ml water) Flavours: mango, peach, pineapple, strawberry & cranberry	Presentation 7 x 66g sachets (make up with 150ml water) Flavours: Orange & mango, red berry, peach, tropical
	

Please note: Juice style powder ONS may not be suitable for cow's milk protein allergy as the product labels state they 'may contain milk/ milk protein.'

Juice-style ONS are less suitable than milk-based for people with diabetes. Blood glucose may need to be more carefully monitored due to possible raised blood sugar levels.

Non-Formulary ONS

The following are not recommended as they are lower in energy (1kcal/ml) than standard ONS and should be replaced, if necessary, with a [first-line powder](#) or [second-line ready-to-drink ONS](#):

- **Ensure 250ml can** (Abbott Nutrition)
- **Fresubin Original Drink 200ml bottle** (Fresenius Kabi)
- **Meritene Energis Shakes and Soups** (Nestle Health Sciences) - should be purchased OTC

Direct to patient sample service

Please click on the links below to order a sample pack for all new ONS prescriptions, to allow the person to try the product (requires login).

AYMES samples	Nualtra samples	Nutricia samples
Aymes Shake Aymes ActaSolve Savoury Aymes ActaGain 1.5 Complete Aymes Shake Compact Aymes ActaSolve Smoothie	Foodlink Complete Altraplen Energy Foodlink Complete Compact Altraplen Compact Foodlink Smoothie	Fortisip Bottle

Appropriate prescribing amounts of oral nutritional supplements

Type of ONS	Number of ONS per day	Amount to prescribe per 7-day week	Amount to prescribe per 28-day month
Powder ONS 57g sachets (7 x 57g boxes) Aymes Shake, Foodlink Complete, Aymes ActaSolve Savoury, Aymes Shake Compact, Foodlink Complete Compact Complan Shake (4 x 57g boxes)	1	399g	1596g
	2	798g	3192g
	3	1197g	4788g
Powder ONS 66g sachets Aymes ActaSolve Smoothie, Foodlink Smoothie (7 x 66g boxes)	1	462g	1848g
	2	924g	3696g
	3	1386g	5544g
Second line ready-to-drink ONS 200ml Altraplen Energy, Aymes ActaGain 1.5 Complete, Fortisip Bottle	1	1400ml	5600ml
	2	2800ml	11200ml
	3	4200ml	16800ml
Second line compact ready-to-drink ONS 125ml Altraplen Compact	1	875ml	3500ml
	2	1750ml	7000ml
	3	2625ml	10500ml