

Title	Guidance for prescribing oral nutritional supplements (ONS) for infants & children with faltering growth in primary care
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References	Faltering growth: recognition & management of faltering growth in children (2017) NICE Guideline NG75 [Accessed 29.01.2025] British Dietetic Association (2018) A Pocket Guide to Clinical Nutrition 5th Edition Parenteral & Enteral Nutrition Group (PENG) [Accessed 30.01.2025] British Dietetic Association (2020) Clinical Paediatric Dietetics 5th Edition UK: Wiley Blackwell [Accessed 29.01.2025]
Associated guidance	
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These guidelines are primarily for use by Registered Dietitians to aid decision making when considering a prescription for ONS for infants and children with faltering growth in primary care

If you have any nutrition-related prescribing enquiries, please contact the Medicines Optimisation Dietetic team at N&WICB: nwicb.dieteticqueries@nhs.net



Pathway for the recognition, management, and monitoring of faltering growth in children

Action 1: Identification of nutritional risk

We recommend using the following criteria for the identification of nutritional risk. See:

- [Faltering growth: recognition & management of faltering growth in children \(NG75\)](#)
- [A Pocket Guide to Clinical Nutrition 5th Edition](#)
- [Clinical Paediatric Dietetics 5th Edition](#)

Infants:

- A fall across one or more weight centile spaces, if birthweight was below the 9th centile
- A fall across two or more weight centile spaces, if birthweight was between the 9th and 91st centiles
- A fall across three or more weight centile spaces, if birthweight was above the 91st centile
- Current weight is below the 2nd centile for age on the [UK-WHO 0-4 years growth chart](#) regardless of birthweight
- Low weight for height – deviation by more than two centile lines

Children over 2 years of age:

- Low weight for height – deviation by more than two centile lines
- Weight decreasing across two or more centile lines
- Current weight is below the 2nd centile for age on the [UK 2-18 years growth chart](#), regardless of birthweight
- Body mass index plots below the 2nd centile line may indicate undernutrition or a small build
- When body mass index plots below the 0.4th centile, this is likely to indicate undernutrition

Onward referral

If faltering growth is identified, consider the underlying cause and whether onward referral to additional services is indicated. This could include referral to:

- Paediatrician to assess if there is a medical cause for faltering growth
- [Mental health services](#) via [Just One Norfolk](#)
- Speech and language therapy (SALT) via [Just One Norfolk](#)
- Safeguarding team via your local Trust

Action 2: Food First

- Discuss food fortification by adding energy dense foods to a meal or snack to increase the nutritional content
- Encourage a little and often eating pattern i.e. three meals plus two to three snacks daily that are high in calories and protein
- Include nourishing drinks in between meals, such as milk, hot chocolate, homemade or shop bought milkshake or smoothies
- Advise parents/ carers to buy full fat versions of food, avoiding 'diet,' 'light' and 'low fat' products
- Provide written information regarding a high energy diet
- Consider if an age-appropriate over-the-counter multivitamin and mineral supplement is required
- Monitor weight as per [NICE \(2017\) NG75](#) guidelines based on age but usually no more than:
 - Daily if less than 1 month old
 - Weekly between 1–6 months old
 - Fortnightly between 6–12 months
 - Monthly from 1 year of age

Action 3: Prescribe ONS

- ONS can be prescribed if:
 - Actions 1 and 2 have been followed and escalation of treatment is indicated (based on clinical judgement)
 - ACBS (Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances) criteria have been met (the principal ACBS indication is 'Disease-related malnutrition/ growth failure'). ACBS indications can be checked on the [NHS Electronic Drug Tariff](#) Part XV Borderline Substances
- Consider cost as well as nutritional profile, suitability, acceptance & sustainability
- Consider use of 'adult' ONS if in suitable age/ weight range. **Many 'adult' ONS are suitable from the age of 6 years**
- Consider powder ONS before ready-to-serve if appropriate
- [First line ONS](#) should be considered initially
- If first line ONS are not clinically appropriate, consider [second line ONS](#)
- Please order a sample pack for all new ONS prescriptions to help determine flavour preferences and confirm tolerance:
 - Samples should be ordered using the [free sample delivery service](#) and sent straight to the patient's home
 - Gain consent for information sharing before ordering
- Request prescription from GP based on ONS preference & tolerance, giving clinical reasoning and ACBS indication for ONS choice

Non-Formulary ONS

Some ONS have been excluded from this guidance because there are more suitable and / or better value alternatives available. However, if you need to request a prescription for a product which is not included in the guidance, please ensure you give your clinical reasoning in your prescription request letter to the GP.

The following template for a prescription request will minimise the risk of prescription errors:

Product	Volume	Brand	Flavour	Dose per day	Dose per 28 days	Total ml per 28 days
Altrini Compact Fibre	125ml	Nualtra	Variety	2 x 125ml	56 x 125ml	7000ml

Dysphagia

Seek specialist review and check the recommendations of the Speech and Language Therapist if the infant or child is prescribed thickeners for dysphagia. **Prescribed ONS should NOT be thickened.** Pre-thickened ONS are available, however, they are out of the scope of this guideline.

Action 4: Review progress

Dietitians and GPs are advised to keep track of the age and weight of the infant / child to ensure that prescribed ONS continue to meet their nutritional requirements.


- Review and assess if adequate weight gain and dietetic goal has been achieved (according to local policy for review frequency)
- If ONS are continued, review acceptability (tolerance/ flavour preferences) to ensure ONS are being taken regularly and as prescribed


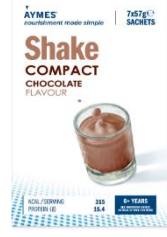


Action 5: Discontinue ONS


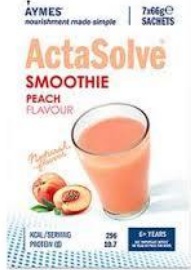


- Consider reducing ONS if goals are partly met i.e. reduce frequency or use up current supply while monitoring weight
- We would recommend stopping oral nutritional supplements if:
 - Body mass index is on or above the 2nd centile line
 - Adequate catch-up weight gain has been achieved and growth is now proportionate; evidenced by weight and height being within 2 centile spaces
- Continue food first strategies and/or ongoing over the counter vitamin and mineral supplement if indicated

Choice of ONS (for disease related malnutrition and/ or growth failure plus other ACBS indications once over 8kg/ 1+ years)

See also NHS Norfolk & Waveney 'Paediatric oral nutritional supplements: Costs & Information'

First line ONS		
1-3 years	3-6 years	6 years +
Aymes ActaJuni liquid (AYMES) 	ActaJuni Shake (AYMES) 	AYMES Shake (AYMES) 
Presentation: 200ml bottle Provides: 300kcal, 8g protein	Presentation: 57g sachet Provides: 288kcal, 8g protein (made up with 150ml water) or 385kcal, 13g protein (made up with 150ml whole milk)	Presentation: 57g sachet Provides: 383-386kcal, 18.5-19.0g protein (made up with 200ml whole milk)
Flavours: Vanilla, Chocolate, (Strawberry – planned)	Flavours: Vanilla, Chocolate, Strawberry, Banana, Neutral	Flavours: Vanilla, Chocolate, Strawberry, Banana, Ginger, Neutral
Second line ready to drink milkshake ONS		
1-6 years	6 years +	
Resource Junior (Nestlé) 	Altraplen Energy (Nualtra) 	
Presentation: 200ml bottle Provides: 306kcal, 6g protein	Presentation: 200ml bottle Provides: 300kcal, 12g protein	
Flavours: Vanilla, Chocolate, Strawberry	Flavours: Vanilla, Chocolate, Strawberry, Banana	

Second line compact ONS (lower volume)	
1-6 years	6 years +
Altrini Compact Fibre (Nualtra) 	Aymes Shake Compact (AYMES) 
Presentation: 125ml bottle Provides: 300kcal, 7.5g protein, 1.75g fibre	Presentation: 57g sachet Make with 100ml whole milk Provides: 320kcal, 15.1g protein
Flavours: Vanilla, Strawberry	Flavours: Vanilla, Chocolate, Strawberry, Banana, Ginger, Neutral
Juice/smoothie style ONS	
1-6 years	6 years +
PaediaSure Plus Juice (Abbott) 	ActaSolve Smoothie (AYMES) 
Presentation: 200ml bottle Provides: 300kcal, 8.4g protein	Presentation: 66g sachet Make with 150ml water Provides: 298kcal, 10.7g protein
Flavours: Apple, Very Berry	Flavours: Strawberry & Cranberry, Mango, Peach, Pineapple

Plant based ONS	
3-6 years	6 years+
Aymes ActaGain 1.5 Plant Powered (AYMES) 	Aymes ActaSolve Smoothie (AYMES) 
Presentation: 200ml bottle Provides: 300kcal, 13.4g protein Use only if milk-based ONS are not suitable.	Presentation: 66g sachet Make with 150ml water Provides: 298kcal, 10.7g protein
Flavours: Salted Caramel, Madagascan Vanilla, Café Latte	Flavours: Strawberry & Cranberry, Mango, Peach, Pineapple
Fibre ONS	
1-6 years	6 years+
Altrini Compact Fibre (Nualtra) 	Aymes Shake Fibre (AYMES) 
Presentation: 125ml bottle Provides: 300kcal, 7.5g protein, 1.75g fibre	Presentation: 57g sachet Make with 200ml whole milk Provides: 375kcal, 19g protein 5g fibre
Flavours: Vanilla, Strawberry	Flavours: Vanilla, Chocolate, Strawberry, Banana, Neutral

Direct to patient sample service

Please click on the links below to order a sample pack for all new ONS prescriptions, to help determine flavour preferences and ensure tolerance before a repeat prescription is requested.

<u>AYMES samples</u> Aymes ActaJuni Shake Aymes ActaJuni liquid Aymes Shake Aymes Shake Compact Aymes Shake Fibre Aymes ActaSolve Smoothie Aymes ActaGain Plant Powered	<u>Nualtra samples</u> Altraplen Energy Altrini Compact Multi Fibre
<u>Abbott Nutrition samples</u> PaediaSure Plus Juice	<u>Nestlé Health Science</u> Resource Junior
<u>Fresenius Kabi samples</u>	<u>Nutricia Samples</u>

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 Aymes ActaJuni Shake (7 x 57g boxes) Aymes Shake (7 x 57g boxes) Aymes Shake Compact (7 x 57g boxes) Aymes Shake Fibre (7 x 57g boxes)	1	399g	1596g
	2	798g	3192g
	3	1197g	4788g
Powder ONS 66g sachets Aymes ActaSolve Smoothie (7 x 66g boxes)	1	462g	1848g
	2	924g	3696g
First & second line ready-to-drink ONS 200ml Aymes ActaJuni liquid Resource Junior Altraplen Energy PaediaSure Plus Juice Aymes ActaGain Plant Powered	1	1400ml	5600ml
	2	2800ml	11200ml
	3	4200ml	16800ml
Second line compact ready-to-drink ONS 125ml Altrini Compact Multi Fibre	1	875ml	3500ml
	2	1750ml	7000ml
	3	2625ml	10500ml