

TAKING ORAL NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS – A GUIDE FOR PATIENTS

You have been advised by your healthcare professional to take oral nutritional supplements. These will be prescribed by your GP and should be taken as prescribed like any other medicines. This leaflet seeks to answer any questions you may have about supplements.

What are oral nutritional supplements?

- Usually powders which are added to milk or may be ready prepared drinks or dessert style in a variety of different flavours
- They provide you with calories, protein, vitamins and minerals which you need
- Some supplements are designed to be added to normal food
- As the name suggests, nutritional supplements are intended to be used to supplement normal food when food alone is not enough to meet your needs.
- **They are not meal replacements.**

What do I do if I have been given nutritional supplements in hospital?

- You may not need to continue to take them when you go home
- If a dietitian has advised that you continue to take supplements, the dietitian will contact your GP to request a prescription and advise your GP on monitoring arrangements
- If you have been given supplements to take home but have not had advice from a dietitian about continuing to take them at home, you should speak to your GP who will assess your need to continue taking supplements at home

Monitoring your supplements

- Nutritional supplements are generally prescribed for 4 weeks at a time. If your supplements have been put on a repeat prescription, you will need to have regular reviews to see if you still need them.
- When you start taking supplements, your healthcare professional will agree with you a goal or target so that you know what the expected end of your treatment will be.
- Your healthcare professional will monitor your progress on a regular basis, at least every 3 months. This will involve checking your weight and how many of the prescribed nutritional supplements you are managing to take.
- Regular reviews are important to make sure that you are getting the maximum benefit from the supplements and that you only have them for as long as you need them.
- When you reach your goal or target you will be advised to stop taking the nutritional supplements.

Nourishing food ideas

In addition to your prescribed oral nutritional supplements, it is important to ensure that the food you eat is as nourishing as possible. You will need to eat a variety of foods, choosing higher calorie options when possible.

Little and often is the key.

Each day, include:

- 3 small meals plus 2-3 snacks or milky drinks
- Some bread, rice, pasta, cereal, potatoes or chapatti at each meal
- Meat, fish, eggs, cheese, yogurt, lentils or beans twice each day
- Some fruit, vegetables or fruit juice at each meal

Make your food more nourishing

- Milk – add 4 tablespoons of milk powder to a pint of full cream milk. This can be used to replace ordinary milk
- Cereals – try adding one or more of the following: evaporated milk, cream, yogurt, syrup, honey, sugar, fresh or dried fruits, nuts (ground almonds)
- Sauces & soups – try adding one or more of the following: butter, cream, evaporated milk, milk powder, grated or cream cheese, cooking oil, margarine, croutons, pasta noodles or rice
- Vegetables – add grated cheese, butter, margarine, mayonnaise or salad cream
- Puddings – try adding one or more of the following: ice cream, cream, evaporated milk, custard, chocolate sauce, jam, syrup, treacle, fresh or dried fruit, nuts (ground almonds), desiccated coconut
- Extra fat

Snack Ideas

- Crisps, dried fruit & nuts
- Slice of cake, doughnuts
- Chocolate and biscuits
- Crackers or breadsticks with cheese or dips
- Creamy yogurts, fromage frais, chilled desserts e.g. mousses & trifles
- Milky drinks e.g. hot chocolate, Horlicks, Ovaltine & milkshakes

Ensure you are:

- Using full cream milk
- Remembering to add extra butter, margarine, cream or grated cheese to all appropriate foods
- Eat regular meals and snacks

Remember that nutritional supplements should be taken as well as normal food. They are not meal replacements. You may need to continue following the advice above to maintain your weight once your nutritional supplements have been stopped.