

Oral Nutrition Supplements: A Guide for the Consumer

What Are Oral Nutrition Supplements (ONS)?

ONS provide additional nutrients, including protein and energy for people who are not meeting their nutrition needs through food alone. This may be due to poor appetite, reduced food intake, increase in nutrition needs or poor absorption of nutrients due to illness.

ONS are typically used in addition to your usual diet, however, some ONS products can be used to provide all your nutritional needs for the day if required. Some individuals may require additional vitamins or minerals.

ONS are available as ready-to-drink liquids (milk-style or juice-style), powder to add to meals, or dessert-style puddings.

What Are the Risks of Poor Nutrition Status?

- Globally 30 to 45% of hospitalized patients are malnourished on admission.¹
- Poor nutrition status is associated with poor health outcomes such as increased risk for infection, decrease in immune function, slow wound healing, and can make it harder to do daily activities.²
- Individuals with inadequate nutrition often stay longer in the hospital, are more likely to be readmitted, and face higher medical costs. These factors can lower their quality of life and increase the risk of further health problems.³
- Oral nutrition supplements are made to help people overcome these factors and get the nutrients they need.



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What Benefits Will I Get From Using ONS?

- Leave the hospital sooner and decreased chance for hospital readmission.³
- Save money on healthcare costs.⁴
- Improve energy, quality of life, and make everyday activities easier.⁵
- Support faster healing and recovery.
- Easy to fit into daily routine and schedule.

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How Do I Take ONS?

- Address concerns that may come up such as intolerances or allergies.
- Discuss access to these products and potential reimbursement options.
- Explore tips on how to make the ONS more tolerable if needed.
- Discuss self-monitoring, such as documenting intake, tolerance, and weight measurements.



It is important to be in contact with your healthcare team on a regular basis so they can monitor and review your progress.

Let them know if you have any changes in your medical condition, appetite, food intake, or weight.



What Should I Discuss with My Healthcare Team?

- ☐ Benefits of using these products.
- ☐ Type, amount, and timing of oral nutrition supplements.
- ☐ Choosing the right type of ONS to ensure your personal taste and preferences are considered.
- ☐ Goals for weight, strength, and energy improvement.

References

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3. Schuetz P, Fehr R, Baechli V, et al. Individualized nutritional support in medical inpatients at nutritional risk: a randomized clinical trial. *J Acad Nutr Diet*. 2019;119(6):903-913.
4. Schuetz P, Kerr KW, Cereda E, Sulo S. Impact of nutrition interventions for malnourished patients: Introduction to health economics and outcomes research with findings from nutrition care studies. *Nutr Clin Pract*. 2024 Dec;39(6):1329-1342.
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