



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Seirbhís Aisíoca Príomhchúraim  
Bealach amach 5 an M50  
An Bóthar Thuaidh  
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Doctor Number :

Circular 017/12

24 September 2012

Dear Doctor

The Health Services face an unprecedented challenge in the current financial environment to deliver services in a way that will minimise any adverse impact on patients and continue to protect as far as possible, our most vulnerable citizens.

One of the areas under review is that of Oral Nutritional Supplements. While a number of studies have shown that Oral Nutritional Supplements are a useful nutrition support, the HSE considers that ongoing guidance from an evidence base would be helpful to improve the quality of prescribing of these products.

The Oral Nutritional Supplements most commonly prescribed in the community are the 'sip feeds' which include readymade milk, juice, and yoghurt based or savoury drinks. Other formulations available include dessert type products and powder supplements that are made up into a drink/ added to drinks or food.

You will recall the previous HSE correspondence in January 2009 providing a copy of the MUST Assessment Tool. This tool is now available in the Online Services section of [www.pcrs.ie](http://www.pcrs.ie). The link is entitled 'MUST Assessment Tool' and located under the sub-heading 'Services for General Practitioners'. There are also a number of useful websites available such as

<http://www.bapen.org.uk/screening-for-malnutrition/must/must-toolkit/the-must-itself>  
<http://www.bapen.org.uk/screening-for-malnutrition/must-calculator>  
<http://www.bapen.org.uk/screening-for-malnutrition/must/must-app>

We are reinforcing the message that Oral Nutritional Supplements should be primarily targeted at the following categories excluding those on enteric tube feeds.

- A. Malnourished Patients:
  - a. A body mass index (BMI) of 18.5kg/m<sup>2</sup> or less
  - b. Unintentional weight loss of greater than 10% within the last 3 - 6 months
  - c. A BMI of less than 20kg / m<sup>2</sup> and unintentional weight loss greater than 5% within the last 3 - 6 months
- B. At risk of malnutrition:
  - a. Have eaten nothing for five consecutive days or are likely to eat nothing for a further five days or longer
  - b. A poor absorptive capacity and / or high nutrient losses and / or increased nutritional requirements
- C. Palliative Care Patients:
  - a. Where a General Practitioner considers it clinically indicated

Please find enclosed a report of the total spend for your panel in 2011 on Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS). The HSE will provide you with more detailed quarterly reports as we work together to reduce the wastage in this area.

It is important to remember that these products must be written on standard GMS monthly prescriptions. You are reminded that this initiative does not apply to patients on enteric tube feeds i.e. PEG, RIG, Nasogastric tubes.

The HSE anticipates that adopting this measured approach will ensure that those patients for whom these products are genuinely clinically indicated can access them when required, while reducing the wastage consistently reported in the research literature. There is a 1 hour CME approved session on appropriate prescribing of ONS available in many areas in the country facilitated by Community Dietitians. Your local community dietician service will be able to advise accordingly.

The anticipated elimination of wastage under this initiative will contribute to a more appropriate use of resources expended in the Health Services and I trust you will support its successful implementation.

Yours faithfully,

**Dr Joe Clarke,**  
Primary Care Lead HSE.

Doctor Number :

**Total 2011 spend for doctor number            on Oral Nutritional Supplements.**

<b>Month</b>	<b>Ingredient Cost €</b>	<b>Fees €</b>	<b>Total €</b>
January	189.84	9.00	198.84
February	158.20	8.00	166.20
March	598.40	25.00	623.40
April	685.88	23.50	709.38
May	1,054.20	34.00	1,088.20
June	318.42	15.50	333.92
July	303.54	16.50	320.04
August	650.80	32.00	682.80
September	919.32	34.50	953.82
October	812.46	22.50	834.96
November	414.50	19.00	433.50
December	487.46	13.00	500.46
<b>Totals</b>	<b>6,593.02</b>	<b>252.50</b>	<b>6,845.52</b>

A history of the cost of your ONS prescribing is available via the 'Prescribing Analysis Report' link in the Doctors Applications Suite.