



To: Each General Practitioner

Re: Standard Oral Nutritional Supplements Prescribing Pathway and List

12 December 2018

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to you to highlight the updated **Prescribing Pathway and List for Standard Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS) for Adults Living in the Community** (enclosed with this letter), developed as a joint collaboration between Primary Care and the Medicines Management Programme (MMP).

The Prescribing Pathway is intended to promote best practice and aid appropriate prescribing of ONS for patients and recommends first-line standard ONS products based on clinical evidence and cost. It recommends **ten standard ONS products** including **four powdered ONS** and **six compact & mini drink sip feeds** (step 6). Where possible, the MMP recommends any of the four powdered ONS products as first-line. Please see attached prescribing list for individual products and considerations for prescribing. A *Frequently Asked Questions* document on the prescribing guidance is available at www.hse.ie/nutritionsupports.

ONS are an effective evidence-based treatment for disease-related malnutrition when used appropriately. However, Irish and International evidence suggests that approximately 30% of ONS prescribing is inappropriate. In 2017, total expenditure on standard ONS on the GMS scheme was approximately €25.8 million. In 2019, the MMP aims to introduce a reimbursement application system for standard ONS. Mindful of the additional workload associated with such application systems, **there will not be a requirement to apply on-line for reimbursement of any of the ten recommended first-line products.**

Best practice indicates that ONS should not be considered an alternative to, or replacement for food, and patients who require nutrition support should always be given dietary advice in conjunction with an ONS prescription. The nutrition supports toolkit available at www.hse.ie/nutritionsupports has patient resources that include a high protein, high calorie diet sheet and a recipe book 'Making the most of every Bite'. It also includes information and guidance in palliative care for patients, their families and carers.

I hope these resources will support you in your practice.

With best wishes,

Professor Michael Barry,
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www.hse.ie/yourmedicines

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