

# ORAL NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENT (ONS) IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

## Introduction

This newsletter has been produced to continue to keep NHSGGC staff informed of the work of the ONS Prescribing Reference group. The NHSGGC Dietetic Service and Pharmacy Services have initiated several work streams to explore new initiatives and innovative ways of working regarding ONS practices. We also continue to support the management of patient safety issues related to ONS and related products.

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### NEW NHSGGC ONS PRESCRIBING GUIDELINES

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## Prescribing ONS on the NHS– getting it right:

- What is ACBS?
- Do you know when patients are eligible for an NHS prescription of ONS?
- What are ACBS indications and where do I find out what indications the product I want is approved for?
- Disease-related malnutrition – what does it mean?



The issues above are not always easy to understand and as we drive forward improvements to the quality of ONS prescribing, we have identified a need to clarify these issues for all staff involved in ONS prescribing. We hope that this article will help to address this.

1. ACBS is the Advisory Committee for Borderline Substances. This is a UK committee, overseen by the Department of Health. This committee approve borderline substances (including ONS) as being prescribable on the NHS under certain conditions known as ‘indications’. Further information can be found on the [ACBS web page](#).

2. Patients **must** meet at least one ACBS criteria to be eligible for an NHS prescription of ONS.

3. ACBS criteria vary for different products, therefore it is sensible to consult the [Drug Tariff](#) which has a definitive list of ACBS criteria and specifies criteria for each ONS product. From this link, ONS can be found under Part XV – Borderline Substances. It may be easiest to open the pdf file and search either by product (List A) or indication (List B).

4. A commonly used indication for NHS prescribing of ONS is 'disease-related malnutrition'. [The Scottish Guidelines for appropriate prescribing of Oral Nutritional Supplements in adults](#) and NHSGGC Guidelines for the appropriate prescribing of oral nutritional supplements in adults (oral use) (see below) recommend that where disease-related malnutrition is suspected, it is essential to use a validated screening tool such as MUST to confirm this. This guideline recommends that ONS should not be used as a first line treatment for people with a MUST score of less than 2.

**If there is no indication for an NHS prescription for ONS, nutritional support should be provided using a 'Food First' approach ([patient leaflet](#)) whereby nutrition is maximised through changes to food intake. Where appropriate, [over the counter](#) ONS can also be encouraged (e.g. Meritene®, Complan®, Aymes Shake Retail®).**

## Community Pharmacy Nutrition Support Service

This service remains operational in Renfrewshire, West Dunbartonshire and East Dunbartonshire areas. Meetings of the operational sub group resumed in August 2020.



**As a reminder, any service queries can be directed to the project team on 0141 201 6012 / [presupdiet@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:presupdiet@ggc.scot.nhs.uk), or through the operational sub-group or community pharmacy champions. Dietitians can also add queries to the electronic 'Issue Log'.**

## New NHSGGC ONS Prescribing Guideline

The new NHSGGC Guidelines for the appropriate prescribing of oral nutritional supplements in adults (oral use) were approved by NHSGGC Nutrition Sub Committee and Area Drug & Therapeutics Committee in February 2020. These guidelines are an adoption of those produced by NHS Scotland in 2018 and are now available on the Clinical Guidelines directory [here](#).

The guidelines take a 'six stage' approach to ONS prescribing, providing practical advice and guidance for each stage of the patient's pathway from identifying a nutritional risk through to monitoring the continued need for and discontinuing ONS.

It is recommended that they are implemented across all health and care settings and multidisciplinary teams, making use of local processes for guideline acceptance and compliance, and that current ONS policies and guidelines are reviewed and updated in line with the new guidelines.

## ONS for patients with IDDSI requirements



NHSGGC Nutrition Sub Committee are currently producing quick reference guidance resources for staff regarding which NHSGGC formulary ONS are suitable for patients with dysphagia who have been advised to take a particular IDDSI (International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative) level for fluids (<https://iddsi.org/framework/>).

There will be 3 resources in total:

- One for adult in-patient settings
- One for adult community settings
- One for staff working with paediatric patients

It is planned that staff will be able to order colour print copies of these resources from NHSGGC Medical Illustrations to display in work areas.

If any advice is required on this in the meantime, please refer to the [NHSGGC Oral and Enteral Nutrition Formulary \(Adults and Older Children\)](#), or contact the prescribing support dietetic team on 0141 201 6012 / [presupdiet@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:presupdiet@ggc.scot.nhs.uk).

As will be made clear on these guidance resources, it is important to note that IDDSI is a framework and not intended to replace clinical decision making regarding suitability of ONS. This is the responsibility of the healthcare professional.

### **New NHSGGC "I have a poor appetite or have lost weight" webpage**

This [new webpage](#), part of the NHSGGC Dietetics website, contains easy to read advice, information, tools and resources for patients and carers who are concerned about their appetite or weight, and health and social care colleagues who support these patients.

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**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE AN ARTICLE  
TO THIS NEWSLETTER PLEASE EMAIL A DRAFT TO:  
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