

Recommended considerations to take before referring residents to GP/dietitians to request nutrition support

Who needs nutrition support?

Individuals with poor appetite or unintentional weight loss may benefit from oral nutrition support. Oral nutrition support can include the provision of nourishing meals and snacks and fortifying normal foods with extra calories and nutrients (a 'food first' approach).

In some cases, oral nutritional supplements (ONS) can be used to supplement people's diets. However, the indications for which ONS can be prescribed on the NHS fall under very strict criteria.

Here are some steps you may consider before contacting your GP or dietitian for nutrition support. Please see the current referral criteria flowchart for older adults attached here.

If weight loss or poor appetite:

Follow 'food first' approach of:

- Prioritise hydration by providing and encouraging regular drinks, e.g. tea, fruit juices, milky drinks
- Encouraging **THREE small enriched** meals, *at least TWO nutritious* snacks AND **TWO nourishing** drinks **DAILY** (see 'Your Guide to Making the Most of your Food' attached for ideas on enriched meals and nourishing drinks)

Before making a referral:

- Complete food record charts (in care homes) with evidence of 'food first' approach implemented **for at least one month**
- Document weekly weights (where possible)
- Inform GP if weight continues to decline to >10% within 3-6 months despite the above
- Re-referrals should only be considered **one month after** the 'food first' approach has been implemented

Please send all the information above to your allocated GP, **e.g. the steps taken towards a 'food first' approach and documented weights.**

A referral to GP/dietitian for nutrition support should be considered if one or more of the following applies:

- BMI < 18.5kg/m²
- > 10% weight loss over the previous 3 to 6 months
- >5% weight loss over the previous 3-6 months AND a BMI <20 kg/m²

OR

- MUST score= 2 or more
- MUST score= 1 on re-screen with ongoing weight loss
- Already on nutritional supplements that need reviewing
- On a modified texture diet that needs reviewing
- *Eaten/ likely to eat little or nothing for ≥ 5 days*

Tips for Fortifying Foods, Snacks and Drinks

Offer small portions of foods and fluids and little and often, e.g. three meals and three snacks per day (mid-morning, mid-afternoon and before bed).

Fortify foods to improve their nutritional content, for example:

- Add extra butter or oil into soups, sauces, potatoes, vegetables
- Add double cream to soups porridge and puddings
- Add condensed milk to porridge, pudding or drinks
- Add cheese to mashed potato, soup, sauces vegetables and omelettes
- Add sugar/jam/honey/syrup/molasses to porridge, cereal and milky puddings
- Add custard or ice cream to cake and puddings
- Add extra sauces / gravies to meats, chicken and fish, e.g. white sauce, parsley sauce
- Thickly add butter/mayonnaise and cheese to sandwiches

Encourage protein foods at each mealtime, for example:

- Meat, poultry, eggs, fish or seafood
- Dairy products – milk, cheese, yoghurt, milky puddings
- Soya products – soya milk, cheese, desserts or tofu (choose calcium enriched products)
- Pulses such as peas, lentils, kidney beans, chick peas, baked beans

Encourage the resident to eat something at each mealtime. If they cannot manage a meal offer a milky drink instead.

Encourage high protein/high calorie snacks between meals, for example:

- Full fat/thick and creamy yoghurts
- Mousses and desserts
- Cheese and crackers
- Chocolate biscuits
- Cakes, muffins and scones
- Muesli bars or flapjacks
- Toast, crumpet or teacakes with butter/margarine/honey/jam or peanut butter
- Cereals with enriched / full fat milk
- Tinned fruit with ice cream
- Sandwiches
- Use mayonnaise, salad cream, cheese, eggs in meals and snacks

Encourage high protein/high calorie drinks, for example:

- Milkshakes, smoothies, hot chocolate, Ovaltine, Horlicks made up with full fat milk
- Ensure good hydration by offering fluid at least two hourly

Recipe for enriched milk: –one pint of whole milk (blue top) with 4 heaped tablespoons of dried milk powder added. Use this to make soups, puddings and drinks

Things to avoid during periods of poor appetite or weight loss:

Diet and low calorie foods and drinks

Avoid giving drinks before meal or during meals as this can decrease appetite

Older adult referral criteria to community dietitians
(For GP Use & Residential / Nursing Homes Guidance)

