



20th June 2019

Circular 015/19

Re: Non First-Line Standard Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS)

Dear Doctor,

Please find enclosed a list of products (List A) that are recommended as first-line choice when prescribing standard ONS.

The purpose of this letter is to notify you of the requirement for prior reimbursement approval for non first-line standard ONS (List B) by prescribers or HSE employed dieticians. A reimbursement application system for non first-line standard ONS will be live from **1st July 2019**.

In this regard, please also find enclosed a letter from Prof Michael Barry, Clinical Lead for the Medicines Management Programme (MMP) to General Practitioners outlining the changes to the reimbursement of standard ONS in more detail. A prescribing 'Tips and Tools' summary document has also been developed and some FAQs for healthcare professionals. To assist further, the HSE has provided a simple patient information leaflet which you may wish to use in your practice. The information will also be available on the MMP website (www.hse.ie/yourmedicines).

There will be no requirement to apply for reimbursement approval of first-line standard ONS products (List A).

If a standard ONS on List A is deemed not clinically appropriate, applications for products on List B can be made through the Special Drug Request section on the Doctor Application Suite (Claiming > Special Drug Request). Reimbursement approvals may take up to 3 working days before approval or non-approval will be communicated back through the Doctor Application Suite.

You are reminded that prior approval for reimbursement under GMS and Community Drug Schemes does not apply to any other clinical nutritional product outside of List B.

Your co-operation with this prescribing initiative is appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Anne Marie Hoey
Primary Care Reimbursement and Eligibility

STANDARD ORAL NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS (ONS)



LIST A

PREFERRED PRODUCT LIST

Drug Code	Product Description	Pack Size
-----------	---------------------	-----------

POWDERED ONS

85100	Complan Shake 57 G Sachet	4
83258	Ensure Shake 57 G Sachet	7
85067	Foodlink Complete 57 G Sachet	7
83248	Foodlink Complete Sachet (starter pack with shaker) 57 G Sachet	5
85068	Foodlink Complete with Fibre 63 G Sachet	7
83236	Fresubin Powder Extra 62 G Sachet	7
83254	Nutriplete Shake 57 G Sachet	7
83255	Nutriplete Shake with Shaker 57 G	5

COMPACT & MINI-DRINK SIP FEEDS

82510	Altraplen Compact 125 ml	1
83956	Ensure Compact 125 ml	1
82530	Fortisip Compact 125 ml	1
82532	Fortisip Compact Fibre 125 ml	1
85093	Fresubin 2 KCal Fibre Mini Drink 125 ml	1
85069	Fresubin 2KCal Mini Drink 125 ml	1

LIST B
PRODUCTS REQUIRING PRIOR APPROVAL

Drug Code	Product Description	Pack Size
83695	Altraplen Smoothie 200 ml	1
83256	Aymes Crème 125 G	4
81776	Calshake 87 G sachet	7
83023	Enshake 96.5 G. Sachet	6
81485	Ensure 250 ml	1
81165	Ensure Plus 200 ml	1
81394	Ensure Plus 220 ml	1
83030	Ensure Plus Crème 125 G	1
81688	Ensure Plus Fibre 200 ml	1
83954	Ensure Plus Juce 220 ml	1
81147	Ensure Plus Savoury 220 ml	1
81153	Ensure Plus Yoghurt Style 220 ml	1
82501	Ensure Twocal 200 ml	1
81152	Forticreme Complete 125 G.	1
83710	Fortijuce 200 ml	1
85070	Fortisip 2 Kcal 200 ml	1
81170	Fortisip 200 ml	1
81608	Fortisip Multi Fibre 200 ml	1
81611	Fortisip Multi Fibre Savoury 200 ml	1
81173	Fortisip Yoghurt Style 200 ml	1
82519	Fresubin 2 Kcal 200 ml	1
83959	Fresubin 2 Kcal Crème 125 G Pot	1
82524	Fresubin 2 Kcal Fibre 200 ml	1
81180	Fresubin Energy 200 ml	1
81615	Fresubin Energy Fibre 200 ml	1
83712	Fresubin Jucy 200 ml	1

82341	Fresubin Original 200 ml	1
83958	Nutlis Fruit Stage 3 150 G Pot	1
83065	Nutricrem 125 G	1
83206	Scandishake Mix 85 G Sachet	6



To: Each General Practitioner

Re: Standard Oral Nutritional Supplement Reimbursement Changes

6 June 2019

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to inform you that the HSE is introducing changes to the reimbursement of standard oral nutritional supplements (ONS).

The changes to reimbursement are in line with the Prescribing Pathway and List for Standard Oral Nutritional Supplements for Adults Living in the Community (available at www.hse.ie/nutritionsupports). This prescribing pathway was developed as a joint collaboration between HSE Primary Care and the Medicines Management Programme (MMP), and recommends twelve first-line standard ONS products based on clinical evidence and cost.

There will be no change to the reimbursement of the first-line standard ONS products in step 6 of the prescribing pathway (List A attached), while non first-line standard ONS products will require reimbursement approval for dispensing on the community drug schemes (List B attached). This initiative will apply to both new and existing patients.

Therefore there will be no requirement to apply for reimbursement approval of the recommended first-line standard ONS products. These first-line products comprise of six powdered ONS and six compact & mini-drink sip feeds. A starter pack is available for two of the first-line powdered ONS products; these also will not require reimbursement approval.

Best practice indicates that ONS should not be considered an alternative to, or replacement for food. Patients who require nutrition support should always be given dietary advice in conjunction with a prescription for ONS. A nutrition supports toolkit which includes a high-protein high-calorie diet sheet, and a recipe book 'Making the most of every Bite' for patients is available at www.hse.ie/nutritionsupports.

This is the initial step in implementation of an initiative to improve efficiencies in this area. The MMP will continue to monitor utilisation of, and expenditure on ONS to inform future phases of this initiative.

My thanks to you for your ongoing support in promoting safe, effective and cost-effective prescribing.

With best wishes,

Professor Michael Barry,
National Clinical Lead, Medicines Management Programme
www.hse.ie/yourmedicines



@MedMgmtProg



- There will be no requirement to apply for online reimbursement approval of standard ONS included in the *First-line Prescribing List* (List A).
- From 1 July 2019, standard ONS not included in the *First-line Prescribing List* (List B) **will require prior online reimbursement approval** for new and existing patients.
- For guidance to aid clinical decision making, refer to the *Prescribing Pathway for the Initiation and Renewal of Standard Oral Nutritional Supplements for Adults Living in the Community* available at www.hse.ie/nutritionsupports.

Standard ONS included in the *First-line Prescribing List* (List A) **do not require prior online reimbursement approval** for dispensing on the Community Drug Schemes.

LIST A

Powdered ONS (requires reconstitution with milk)	GMS code
Complan® Shake 57g sachet	85100
Ensure® Shake 57g sachet	83258
Foodlink Complete® 57g sachet	85067
Foodlink Complete® 57g sachet (starter pack with shaker)	83248
Foodlink Complete® with Fibre 63g sachet	85068
Fresubin® Powder Extra 62g sachet	83236
Nutriplete® Shake 57g sachet	83254
Nutriplete® Shake 57g sachet (starter pack with shaker)	83255

Compact & mini-drink sip feeds	GMS code
Altraplen® Compact 125 ml	82510
Ensure® Compact 125 ml	83956
Fortisip® Compact 125 ml	82530
Fortisip® Compact Fibre 125 ml	82532
Fresubin® 2Kcal Mini Drink 125 ml	85069
Fresubin® 2Kcal Fibre Mini Drink 125 ml	85093

Practice Point

- ✓ Review patients on a regular basis (within 3 months) to ensure compliance with ONS and to monitor progress in treatment goals and dietary intake.
- ✓ Discontinue when treatment goals are met and/or when the patient is established on adequate oral intake from food.

Standard ONS not included in the *First-line Prescribing List* (List B) **require prior online reimbursement approval** for dispensing on the Community Drug Schemes.

LIST B

ONS	GMS code
High energy (1.5 kcal/ml), standard protein	
Ensure® Plus 200 ml	81165
Ensure Plus® 220 ml	81394
Ensure Plus® Savoury 220 ml	81147
Ensure Plus® Yoghurt Style 220 ml	81153
Fortisip® 200 ml	81170
Fortisip® Yoghurt Style 200 ml	81173
Fresubin® Energy 200 ml	81180
High energy (1.5 kcal/ml), standard protein with fibre	
Ensure Plus® Fibre 200 ml	81688
Fortisip® Multi Fibre 200 ml	81608
Fortisip® Multi Fibre Savoury 200 ml	81611
Fresubin® Energy Fibre 200 ml	81615
Very high energy (2 kcal/ml)	
Ensure® TwoCal 200 ml	82501
Fresubin® 2Kcal 200 ml	82519
Fortisip® 2Kcal 200 ml	85070
Very high energy (2 kcal/ml) with fibre	
Fresubin® 2Kcal Fibre 200 ml	82524

ONS	GMS code
1 kcal/ml	
Ensure® 250 ml	81485
Fresubin® Original 200 ml	82341
Juice style sip feeds	
Altraplen® Smoothie 200 ml	83695
Ensure® Plus Juce 200 ml	83784
Ensure® Plus Juce 220 ml	83954
Fortijuce® 200 ml	83710
Fresubin® Jucy 200 ml	83712
Semi-solid (pudding)	
Aymes® Crème 125g	83256
Ensure® Plus Crème 125g	83030
Forticreme® Complete 125g	81152
Fresubin® 2Kcal Crème 125g	83959
Nutlis® Fruit Stage 3 150g	83958
Nutricrem® 125g	83065
High energy, standard protein powdered ONS	
Enshake® 96.5g sachet	83023
Calshake® 87g sachet	81776
Scandishake® Mix 85g sachet	83206

Authorisation of Reimbursement

- Hospital clinicians and hospital/community dietitians must be **user-registered** with the PCRS to apply for reimbursement of **ONS on List B**. The registration form is available at www.pcrs.ie > **Online Services** > **Services for Hospitals Only** > **Special Drug Request User Registration Form**. Email cert.info@hse.ie for more details.
- The online reimbursement application system can be accessed for hospital clinicians and hospital/community dietitians on the PCRS website www.pcrs.ie > **Online Services** > **Services for Hospitals Only** and for GPs in the **GP Application Suite** under **Claiming** > **Special Drug Request**.
- Online reimbursement approval of **ONS on List B** will be based on clinical information provided to support the application. There is a facility to upload supporting documentation from relevant healthcare professionals.

- Once reimbursement is authorised, **ONS on List B** will be reimbursed for a period of up to six months from the date of approval without the need for a further online application.
- If **ONS on List B** are required beyond a period of six months, a further online application will be required.

Review of Standard Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS) Prescriptions

Confirm appropriate indication as per ONS prescribing guidance (available at www.hse.ie/nutritionsupports) for both new and repeat prescriptions.

Review product type for prescriptions of ONS on List B and consider alternative products on List A (no online reimbursement approval required).

See below for suggested alternatives to commonly prescribed List B products. Consult with dietetic services if available; contact details on www.hse.ie/nutritionsupports.

High energy (1.5 kcal/ml), standard protein ONS

- Ensure Plus® (1.5 kcal/ml) is the most commonly prescribed sip feed on List B
- Other sip feeds in this category include Fortisip® & Fresubin® Energy
- These ONS are included on List B & require prior online reimbursement approval
- List A ONS are **nutritionally comparable** to these List B ONS

LIST B ONS

1.5 kcal/ml sip feeds

provide 300 kcal & 11.2 – 12.5g protein

Product	GMS code	Size	Unit Cost
Ensure® Plus	81165	200 ml	€1.70
Fortisip®	81170		
Fresubin® Energy	81180		

If the patient or carer can prepare drinks and is suitable for powdered ONS*

If the patient requires ready-made or lower volume sip feeds, or is unsuitable for powdered ONS*

*Please refer to *Standard ONS First-line Prescribing List for Adults living in the Community for considerations for prescribing powdered ONS and compact or mini-drink sip feeds.*

Do not alter product choice for tube fed patients without consulting a dietitian.

LIST A ONS

Powdered ONS (~2 kcal/ml)

provide 380-397 kcal & 15.5 - 18.3g protein (reconstituted –one sachet plus 200 ml whole milk)

Product	GMS code	Size	Unit Cost
Complan® Shake	85100	57g sachet	€0.74
Ensure® Shake	83258	57g sachet	€0.74
Foodlink Complete®	85067	57g sachet	€0.74
Fresubin® Powder Extra	83236	62g sachet	€0.72
Nutriplete® Shake	83254	57g sachet	€0.67

Compact & mini-drink sip feeds (2 - 2.4 kcal/ml)

provide 250- 300 kcal & 12 - 12.8g protein

Product	GMS code	Size	Unit Cost
Altraplen® Compact	82510	125 ml	€1.38
Ensure® Compact	83956		
Fortisip® Compact	82530		
Fresubin® 2Kcal Mini Drink	85069		

Prescribe a 7 day trial initially to check patient tolerance as taste is a key factor for compliance

Semi-solid style (pudding) ONS

- These ONS are included on List B & require prior reimbursement approval

provide 171 - 250 kcal & 7.1- 12.5g protein (varies depending on product)

Where a patient **does not** have a **diagnosed swallowing difficulty**, standard ONS on List A are recommended based on clinical evidence and cost.

Semi-solid style ONS:

- Should ideally only be prescribed under the guidance and recommendation of both a speech and language therapist and a dietitian as ONS must be in line with a patient's current safe swallow recommendation
- Should be used as a supplement to diet **not** as an alternative to meals and snacks
- Should **not** be used as a tablet administration aid

Product	GMS code	Size
Aymes Crème	83256	125g
Ensure Plus® Crème	83030	
Forticreme Complete®	81152	
Fresubin® 2 Kcal Crème	83959	150g
Nutillis® Fruit Stage 3	83958	
Nutricrem®	83065	

Products are listed alphabetically in each category. Please refer to individual product datasheets available on the manufacturers' website for more information.

More information on this initiative is available on www.hse.ie/yourmedicines.



Reimbursement of Standard Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS) Questions and Answers for Healthcare Professionals

1) What are oral nutritional supplements and what are they used for?

Oral nutritional supplements (ONS) are legally defined as food for special medical purposes (FSMPs) to be used under medical supervision. They are commercially manufactured liquid, powdered and semi-solid food products with varying nutritional content. ONS are an effective evidence-based treatment for disease-related malnutrition.

Standard ONS are defined as either powdered or ready-made multi-nutrient (complete or incomplete) products providing a mix of macronutrients and micronutrients.

The nutrition value is 1 - 2.4 kcals per ml and less than 20% of the energy value is provided by protein.

Best practice indicates that ONS should not be considered an alternative to, or replacement for food except in specific clinical situations under the supervision of a registered dietitian.

Patients who require nutrition support should always be given dietary advice in conjunction with an ONS prescription. Patient dietary resources such as a high-protein, high-calorie diet sheet and a cookbook '*Making the most of every bite*' are available at www.hse.ie/nutritionsupports.

2) What standard ONS are recommended in the *HSE First-Line Prescribing List for Adults Living in the Community*?

The *HSE First-line Prescribing List* recommends specific powdered ONS and compact & mini-drink sip feeds (**List A**). These were selected based on clinical evidence, patient factors, and cost.

Standard ONS on List A do not require prior reimbursement approval for dispensing on the Community Drug Schemes.

The HSE updated the *First-line Prescribing List* and *Prescribing Pathway for the Initiation and Renewal of Standard ONS for Adults Living in the Community* in April 2019. This guidance promotes best practice and supports appropriate initiation and renewal of ONS prescriptions (available at www.hse.ie/nutritionsupports).

3) What ONS products does the new online reimbursement application system relate to?

This new online reimbursement application system relates to standard ONS products included on **List B**. These are standard ONS which were not identified as first-line in the Prescribing List.

4) What ONS products are not affected by the new online reimbursement application system?

The following ONS products are not affected and do not require online reimbursement approval:

- ONS products on **List A**.
- Disease-specific ONS (e.g. renal-, diabetic-, oncology- and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease-specific sip feeds),
- High protein sip feeds,
- Pre-thickened sip feeds,
- Modular (single nutrient) ONS,
- Paediatric sip feeds, and
- Thickeners.

5) If none of the standard ONS on List A are clinically appropriate for a patient, can I prescribe from List B for patients on the Community Drug Schemes?

Yes. Reimbursement of standard ONS on **List B** will be approved based on a review of the information provided by the patient's GP, hospital dietitian or medical team, or community dietitian. ONS should only be prescribed for patients who have a clinical indication. Therefore, the application should include the clinical rationale and evidence to support the prescribing decision.

6) If a patient is approved for reimbursement of a standard ONS on List B, how long will this approval last?

Once reimbursement is authorised, the ONS will be reimbursed for a period of up to six months from the date of approval. After this time, a further application can be submitted if the patient requires on going treatment. Please note that reimbursement approval does not replace the normal requirement for prescriptions. Therefore, monthly prescriptions will still be required.

7) How does a GP submit an application for reimbursement approval of standard ONS on List B to the Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS)?

GPs can apply through the **Special Drug Request** section on their **Doctor Application Suite (Claiming > Special Drug Request)**.

Reimbursement applications for standard ONS on **List B** must be submitted through the online system.

8) Can other healthcare professionals submit an application for reimbursement approval of standard ONS on List B to the PCRS?

Yes, HSE dietitians and hospital clinicians can also apply. A link to the application system is available on the PCRS website (www.pcrs.ie > **Online Services > Services for Hospitals Only**).

Note: HSE dietitians and hospital clinicians must be user-registered with the PCRS to apply.

The **Special Drug Request User Registration Form** is available on the PCRS website (www.pcrs.ie > **Online Services > Services for Hospitals Only**). Completed registration forms can be submitted to cert.info@hse.ie. Once authorised, the user will be issued with a username and password.

9) If a standard ONS is required on discharge from hospital or in the hospital outpatient setting, what steps are required for reimbursement approval?

- Where a standard ONS included on **List A** is prescribed on discharge, there is no need to apply online for reimbursement approval.
- Clinicians working in an acute hospital setting are encouraged to give due consideration to the suitability of ONS on **List A** (which do not require an online application), before prescribing a standard ONS on **List B**.
- If an individual patient (irrespective of age) clinically requires a product on **List B**, there is an opportunity for a hospital dietitian or member of the medical team to apply for reimbursement approval, setting out the exceptional circumstances that arise for that patient. The acute clinician should also notify the community prescriber of the clinical indication, recommended product, dose and duration.

10) If a standard ONS on List B is prescribed in the community setting, what steps are required for reimbursement approval?

Where a standard ONS on **List B** has been prescribed in the community setting, due consideration should now be given to the suitability of ONS on **List A**.

If an individual patient (irrespective of age) clinically requires a product on **List B**, the patient's GP or HSE community dietitian can apply for reimbursement approval through the online reimbursement application system. Information from other relevant healthcare professionals (e.g. dietitians, speech and language therapists) who influence the prescribing decision can be included or uploaded to support the application.

11) If a patient is using a standard ONS on List B for bolus feeding via an enteral feeding tube, what steps are required for reimbursement approval?

If a patient is using a standard ONS on **List B** for bolus feeding via an enteral feeding tube e.g. nasogastric, naso-jejunal, gastrostomy or jejunostomy, an online application is required. Reimbursement will be approved on receipt of an online application identifying enteral tube feeding as the prescribing indication.

Prescriptions for patients using standard ONS via an enteral feeding tube should not be adjusted without consultation with a registered dietitian.

12) How can I check if a patient has been approved for reimbursement of standard ONS on List B under the Community Drug Schemes?

Approval for reimbursement of standard ONS on **List B** can be confirmed by the pharmacist or GP through the **Eligibility Confirmation** section on the:

- **Pharmacy Application Suite (Eligibility Confirmation > Secure Scheme Checker)** or
- **Doctor Application Suite (Panel Management > Eligibility Confirmation > Secure Scheme Checker).**

Reimbursement approvals can be found under **Patient Specific Arrangements**.

13) Will List A and List B be updated on a regular basis?

Yes, **List A** and **List B** will be updated as new products are added to the PCRS list of reimbursable items. Updated lists will be available on www.hse.ie/yourmedicines.

14) What is the appeals process if an application for a standard ONS product on List B is not approved?

It is possible to appeal a negative reimbursement decision from the online application process. Appeals must be made by the patient's GP, hospital dietitian/medical team or HSE community dietitian. Sufficient information to support the clinical need for reimbursement of the individual ONS product must be outlined.

Appeals must be sent by email to the PCRS at pcrs.ons@hse.ie and must include the reference number of the initial online application. A secure email address to communicate clinical information must be used, for example; healthmail secure clinical email (www.healthmail.ie).

All communication must be online to provide an auditable record of applications and appeals where they arise.

An email outlining the final reimbursement decision will be communicated back to the GP, hospital dietitian/medical team or community dietitian who made the appeal.

15) Where can I access more information to support people who are identified as at risk of malnutrition or malnourished?

An online toolkit to support the first-line management of malnutrition in the community is available at www.hse.ie/nutritionsupports.

The toolkit includes the Standard ONS Prescribing Pathway and List, high- protein high-calorie dietary advice resources, information on using ONS for patients and carers, and other condition-specific information.



Reimbursement of Standard Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS) Information for patients

Introduction

Oral nutritional supplements (ONS) are specially-made food products. They contain energy, protein and other nutrients. They are usually intended for short-term use to treat malnutrition. They are typically used in addition to a normal diet, when diet alone does not meet daily nutritional requirements. The HSE has recommended a list of standard ONS to be used as first-line product choice (List A).

What reimbursement changes are being introduced for ONS?

From **1 July 2019**, there are changes to the way that some standard ONS are reimbursed on the medical card or drugs payment scheme card.

The HSE has compiled a second list of standard ONS (List B). From **1 July 2019**, if you are prescribed a standard ONS on List B, your GP, HSE dietitian or clinician must apply online for reimbursement approval of this product.

Reimbursement approval for ONS on List B is based on whether you have a clinical (medical) requirement for the product.

There is no change to reimbursement for ONS on List A (no online application is needed).

If an ONS on List B is approved for you, the pharmacy can dispense this product on your medical card or drugs payment scheme card. This ONS will be reimbursed for a period of up to six months from the date of approval.

If an ONS on List B is not approved, your doctor or dietitian can recommend an ONS from List A or they may appeal the reimbursement decision on your behalf.

Does my GP or dietitian know about these changes?

Yes. GPs and dietitians have been informed about the new reimbursement application system.

Why has the process changed?

The reimbursement process for ONS has changed in order to support appropriate prescribing of standard ONS.

ONS on List B (which require reimbursement approval) include some products which have the same nutritional value as List A ONS, but are more costly. List B also includes products which are intended for use in special circumstances only. The new online reimbursement application system will ensure these products are used only when there is a clinical need.

Where can I get more information on nutrition supports and ONS?

Please visit www.hse.ie/nutritionsupports for more information on nutrition supports and ONS.

The website offers resources, which should be used on the advice of your doctor or dietitian. Resources include:

- ***Making the most of every bite*** - a high-protein, high-calorie cookbook
- ***How to use oral nutritional supplements*** - a guide for patients, their carers and families

These are available to view or download.

What do the reimbursement changes mean for me?

For some people, there is no change at all.

If you have a repeat prescription for ONS written before **1 July 2019**, ask your pharmacist or GP if the changes apply to you. If the ONS prescribed for you requires reimbursement approval, your GP may change your prescription or arrange the application on your behalf.

What if I am under the care of a private dietitian?

A private registered dietitian can forward the relevant information to your GP. Your GP can then submit the application on your behalf. Only GPs, HSE dietitians and clinicians can use the online reimbursement system.