



10th July 2019

Circular 024/19

Re: Standard ONS and Local HSE Community Dietetic Service

Dear Pharmacist,

I refer to Circular 016/19.

Please find enclosed a communication from Margaret O'Neill, HSE Nutrition / Dietetic Lead outlining contact details for your local community dietitian service at <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/2/primarycare/community-funded-schemes/nutrition-supports/healthcare-professionals/community-dietetics-referrals-updated-july-2019.pdf>.

I want to draw your particular attention to the fact that prior reimbursement approval is only required where the prescriber wishes to **maintain or initiate a patient on a product from List B**. No other nutritional product is affected.

If your patient has a diagnosis of dysphagia and requires semi-solid style ONS, it is necessary for the prescriber to access the application system to get approval in these circumstances.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Anne Marie Hoey'.

Anne Marie Hoey
Primary Care Reimbursement and Eligibility



Contacting your local HSE Community Dietetic service

Dear Colleagues,

PCRS have recently written to GPs and pharmacists about changes to the reimbursement of some standard oral nutritional supplements (ONS). **The changes apply to the named List B items only and began on 1st July 2019.**

These changes are designed to support appropriate prescribing of standard ONS in the community.

Please take note of products that are out of scope –List A and all disease specific, high protein, pre-thickened, modular, paediatric sip feeds and thickeners do not require an application. If your patient has a diagnosis of dysphagia please access the application system to get approval for appropriate semi solid style ONS.

We want to ensure you have contact details for your [local community dietitian service](#), so that you can refer patients as needed. You can also contact the community dietitian or dietitian manager in your area if you have questions around current patients. For questions about the PCRS reimbursement system itself, please email pcrs.ons@hse.ie.

Appropriate prescribing of ONS

Assessing risk of malnutrition in a patient and referring to a CORU-registered dietitian where required, is extremely important. **Patients with complex nutritional needs should be under the care of a dietitian.**

The [HSE Standard ONS Prescribing Pathway](#) identifies the key steps around prescribing ONS:

1. Prior to initiation or renewal of ONS, patients should be appropriately screened using a validated screening tool.
2. Refer patient to dietetic service.
3. Assess for and address underlying causes of malnutrition.
4. Set goals of nutritional treatment.
5. Provide basic high-energy, high-protein dietary advice (see online toolkit resources below).
6. Choose a standard ONS if appropriate.
7. Review and discontinue ONS when the patient has reached their nutritional goals.

HSE Nutrition Supports Toolkit

The HSE Nutrition Supports toolkit is available online and includes resources for both healthcare professionals and patients. The aim is to assist first-line management of malnutrition in the community.

The toolkit includes dietary resources for you to give to patients. Making the Most of Every Bite, a high-energy, high-protein cookbook, is available to view or download. You can also access a module on the Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool (MUST) via HSELand.

We encourage you to link in with your local dietitian manager for support in treating patients who are malnourished or at risk of malnutrition.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret O'Neill
National Nutrition / Dietetic Lead
margaret.oneill1@hse.ie

Key points about malnutrition

Who is at risk of malnutrition?

- ✓ older people, 65+ (particularly in care or nursing homes)
- ✓ older people with frailty
- ✓ people with cancer
- ✓ people with long-term conditions (dementia, kidney disease, inflammatory bowel disease, other gastro conditions)
- ✓ people on low incomes with poor diet
- ✓ people who misuse drugs and/or alcohol

It is estimated that approximately 145,000 people in Ireland are at risk of, or experiencing, malnutrition at any one time.

Providing good nutritional care to patients helps improve their health outcomes and reduces health care costs.

The dietitian's role

What does a registered dietitian do?



How is malnutrition diagnosed?

Malnutrition is diagnosed following a nutritional assessment and considering the following factors.

- body mass index (BMI)
- unintentional weight loss in recent months
- person's ability to feed themselves
- factors, such as a health condition, which impacts the body's ability to absorb nutrients from food
- medical condition and results of any medical tests or investigations, including blood tests