

# Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS)

Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS) may be prescribed for people at high risk of malnutrition who cannot meet their nutritional needs through food alone. It is important to follow a fortified diet, in addition to taking ONS to promote weight gain and prevent weight loss. The '**Food Enrichment**' booklet has information on how you can fortify your diet and maximise your nutritional intake.

**Food fortification** means adding household ingredients to food/drinks to increase the nutritional content, without significantly increasing the portion size, taste or texture.

## Why do I need oral nutritional supplements (ONS)?

You may have been prescribed ONS whilst you were in hospital or unwell. ONS contain energy (calories) and protein which can help you to meet your nutritional requirements whilst you have a reduced oral intake.

### ONS Top Tips:

- **Your ONS prescription should be assessed regularly by a Dietitian** to ensure that the product is right for you as there are many different types of ONS
- **ONS are generally intended for short-term use only.** Evidence suggests ONS are effective for up to 8 weeks.
- **ONS do not replace your meals.** ONS should be taken alongside a fortified diet.
- **Take your ONS in between meal times,** for instance mid-morning and before bedtime, as they may make you feel full.
- **Discuss your flavour choices with the pharmacist** when you place your order at the pharmacy, as most ONS are available in a variety of flavours
- **Try chilling your ONS in the fridge** to make them more palatable.
- **Once opened most ONS can be kept for up to 4 hours at room temperature,** then they should be disposed of or refrigerated and consumed within 24 hours.
- **If you require thickened fluids you will need to thicken the ONS** to the correct consistency: check with your Speech & Language Therapist for further information.
- **Store ONS in a cool, dry place** away from radiators and other sources of heat.
- **Check the use by date** on your ONS products.

You may want to try **homemade nourishing drinks** instead or continue to have nourishing drinks after you have finished your prescription. Our '**Nourishing Drinks**' booklet has easy-to-make recipes that contain equivalent calories and protein to ONS with a wide variety of flavours. Some recipes contain more calories and protein than prescribed ONS, and you may find flavours you prefer.