

Position Statement

Prescribing for Clinical Need: Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS) in care and nursing homes

ONS for care and nursing home residents to be no longer routinely prescribed

Summary

The prescribing of food is a low clinical priority and is only appropriate where nutritional needs are not being met by consuming normal or fortified foods. Blackpool GP practices will no longer prescribe oral nutritional supplements (ONS), such as Ensure®/Ensure Plus®, Enshake®, Aymes® Shake, and Complan® Shake for the majority of residents in care or nursing homes. This does not include sip feeds given via a PEG tube, which will still be prescribed in the usual way. All prescribing of ONS for individuals who are resident in care homes must only be initiated following assessment and authorisation by a dietitian.

Introduction

The prescribing spend on oral nutritional supplements (ONS) nationally has increased steadily over recent years and studies have indicated that much of the prescribing of ONS is not reviewed appropriately. As a result many CCGs, including Blackpool, have focussed on reducing the spend on ONS and, though the methods have been different, the general aim of work has been to reduce inappropriate prescribing and to review patients prescribed ONS more regularly and with more expertise.

Background

Blackpool CCG (BCCG) already provides guidance on the general prescribing of sip feeds in general practice (see [BCCG Sip Feeds Prescribing Guidance, November 2013](#)).

This position statement is an extension of the above document and is intended to support healthcare practitioners in dealing with requests for sip feeds for care and nursing home residents.

BCCG has taken the decision that NHS funding should not be spent providing ONS support to residents within care and nursing homes. All homes have facilities to prepare fortified meals and high energy snacks where disease-related malnutrition is present, as well as modified consistency, i.e. soft or blended, diets for residents with swallowing difficulties. ONS are classed as a food and are available to purchase “over the counter”, such as Complan® (Nutricia) or Nurishment® (Dunn’s River).

[Regulation 14](#) of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Guidance for Providers is clear that homes are responsible for assessing and making the necessary arrangements for the provision of suitable nutrition and hydration for all residents.

Resident’s nutritional needs should continue to be screened using the MUST calculator <http://www.bapen.org.uk/screening-and-must/must-calculator>. Where a patient is identified to be at medium or high risk of malnutrition (MUST score of 1 or 2), their food should be fortified or enriched; this means adding nourishment to normal food to increase nutritional content without increasing the volume of food which needs to be eaten <http://www.bapen.org.uk/nutrition-support/nutrition-by-mouth/food-first-food-enrichment>. Together with two or three snacks or milky drinks between meals the aim is to increase energy intake by around 500 - 600 kilocalories per day. <http://www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk/campaign/>

Prescribing of ONS for individuals who are resident in a care home must only be initiated following assessment and authorisation by a dietitian. Referrals for assessment by a dietitian must include food and fluid records for four days and a risk assessment using the MUST tool.

Implementation

Practices to review their ONS prescribing for all residents in a care home with a view to stopping prescribing of ONS where appropriate

- Existing residents already being prescribed ONS can continue until a dietetic review has been carried out
- Residents who are admitted to care homes currently receiving ONS or who have recently received ONS as part of care elsewhere should be referred to dietetics for review (ONS may be part of a care plan)
- All prescribing of ONS must be for a specified period of time, and requires regular reassessment of need. Residents in the community requiring ONS for longer than 6 months should be referred to the dietitians

N.B Existing prescription recommendations from any dietician should not be substituted without consultation with dietetics

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For advice and support please contact the patient's GP practice.

Further sources of information:

- [British Dietitians Association – Food Fact Sheet: Malnutrition](#)
- [Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool \(MUST\)](#)
- [The Better Hospital Food website](#) may have useful information and recipe ideas.
- [The National Association of Care Catering](#)– have recipes, NVQ courses