

Moving oncology care forward so that you can look forward to life's moments

Oral nutrition supplements



1 What are oral nutrition supplements (ONS)?

- Oral nutrition supplements (ONS) are sterile, specially formulated products that provide you with additional nutrients (including protein, energy, vitamins and minerals) when you are not meeting your nutritional goals through food alone. This might be due to a loss of appetite; reduced food intake; poor nutrient absorption due to illness; increased nutrient losses due to vomiting and diarrhoea; and increased nutritional needs due to illness.
- ONS is mostly used to complement your current dietary intake, however, in some cases, ONS can be used to provide you with all your nutritional needs for the day (a sole source of nutrition).
- Not all ONS are nutritionally complete, thus, not all ONS can be used as a sole source of nutrition. It is indicated on the ONS packaging if it can be used as a sole source of nutrition.
- ONS are available as a powder to add to liquids (milk or water), ready-to-drink liquids (milk or juice style), a powder to add to meals, soups, and dessert-style puddings.

2 What are the benefits of ONS?

- ONS can help you to achieve your nutritional goals, especially when you are sick and have increased nutrient requirements.
- ONS provide you with additional energy, protein, vitamins and minerals. Thus, preventing you from becoming malnourished and your muscles from wasting away.
- ONS can also be used to treat malnutrition and muscle wasting.
- ONS can ensure optimal nutrition in cancer patients, which is associated with:



Healthy weight and adequate muscle stores



Better prognosis



Decreased risk of infections



Decreased risk of side-effects from cancer treatment



Increased compliance with cancer treatment



Increased effectiveness of treatment



Shorter and less frequent hospital stays



Decreased risk for bone fractures



More independence



Decreased healthcare costs



Decreased stress levels

3 Where can you find ONS?

ONS is stocked by most of your local pharmacies, as well as pharmacies located in hospitals. The availability of the different ONS varies widely from pharmacy-to-pharmacy.



Some ONS are available on pharmacy shelves



Some ONS are kept at the pharmacy's dispensary



Some ONS are only ordered when you request them from the pharmacist

It is important to ask the pharmacist about the ONS in stock and to phone other pharmacies for availability if they do not have your recommended ONS in stock.

What should you discuss with your dietitian?



The different types of ONS and flavours available to suit your nutritional needs, medical condition and flavour preferences



The amount and frequency to take the ONS



How to prepare your ONS, where applicable



Any food allergies and / or intolerances you have



Any changes in your medical condition, appetite, food intake, weight and presence of treatment side effects affecting your dietary intake



Financial aspects of ONS, and writing a motivation letter to submit to your medical aid (if applicable)

4 Monitoring of ONS and dietary intake

It is important to consult with your registered dietitian to ensure the use of ONS remains appropriate and adequate. Your registered dietitian will monitor:



If your dietary intake is meeting your nutritional requirements



If your weight has increased to your target weight



If your BMI (your weight for your height) is within the healthy range



If your medical condition has changed



If you experience side effects from the ONS



If you cannot tolerate the recommended ONS anymore due to e.g., taste fatigue

5 How should you take ONS?

- The amount and frequency of ONS vary among individuals based on their current nutritional status and dietary intake. Consult a registered dietitian to provide you guidance on the amount and frequency of ONS that is suitable to reach your individual nutritional goals.
- Incorporate ONS with a range of flavours and styles in your diet to avoid taste fatigue
- Some ONS can be consumed at different temperatures (chilled, frozen, heated) or can be incorporated into recipes to ensure variety. It is important to check the ONS label to determine if the ONS can be frozen, chilled and / or heated.
- Liquid ONS can be consumed between meals or sipped on throughout the day. It can also be used to make smoothies.
- Ready-to-eat pudding-style ONS can be enjoyed as a snack or for dessert.
- Check the ONS label for the expiry date and storage instructions.

Life Oncology units have multidisciplinary teams that can support you during your journey to recovery – this includes registered dietitians (RDs).

The following are some of the areas a registered dietitian can help you in:



Assess your nutritional status and your current dietary intake



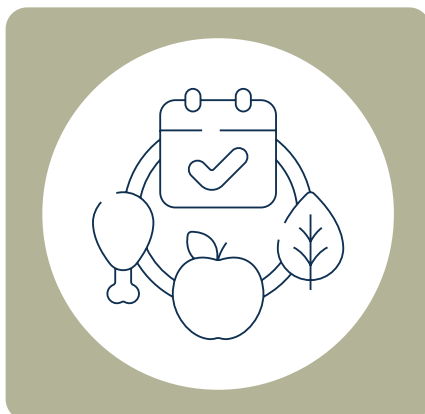
Provide you with an individualised meal plan for optimal nutrition



Recommend appropriate oral supplements to provide you with additional nutrients, including protein and energy when you are not meeting your nutritional needs through food alone



Provide you with guidelines on how to manage cancer treatment side effects that influence your dietary intake



If you need assistance with any of the above areas – ask your healthcare provider to refer you to a registered dietitian.

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