

# Medicines Matters

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## ONS Monitoring / Appropriate Prescribing

### Prescribing and Deprescribing of Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS)

The purpose of ONS is to supplement food intake, not replace it and its use does not remove the need to manage the underlying condition responsible for the patient's poor appetite. It is important to ensure that prescribing is both appropriate for the patient and that treatment length is such that any waste is minimised.

National Guidance for adults on ONS can be found in NICE guidance here: [NICE CG32](#). Further resources for healthcare professionals can be found in [The Malnutrition Pathway](#) and useful information for patients or carers around food first can be found here: [Food First](#).

Regular patient monitoring is **essential** to ensure appropriate prescribing. The patient, carer or care provider should, as a minimum, **provide a monthly weight** for any patient prescribed ONS to assist regular and accurate reviews of the treatment.

The data below shows that Oral Nutrition is ranked #3 (behind Diabetes and Respiratory spend for the same period ) in prescribing costs ranked by BNF sections for spend from April to June 2025.

#### Lancashire and South Cumbria ICB: Prescribing cost data for the Top 50 BNF sections in terms of current spend - April to July 2025

RDTC © 2025	Current spend	Cost growth %	Cost difference
■ Drugs used in diabetes	£19,010,721	20.29	£3,206,548
■ Corticosteroids (respiratory)	£10,682,193	7.60	£754,668
■ Oral nutrition	£5,586,510	7.82	£405,193
■ Analgesics	£5,026,985	-0.76	-£38,487
■ Detection Sensor Interstitial Fluid/Gluc	£3,968,588	32.05	£963,178
■ Antiepileptic drugs	£3,448,781	-8.76	-£331,311

Practices are encouraged to review their processes for patient monitoring to ensure appropriate prescribing of ONS for patients under their care. Appropriate prescribing and deprescribing has the potential benefits of reducing the practices' prescribing spend and also creating a positive environmental impact.

Resources to support identifying gaps and updating monitoring information including an example letter to send to care homes, letter to send to individuals in the community, example text message and an EMIS search can be found on the Nutrition section of the Primary Care Intranet here: [Nutrition – Lancashire and South Cumbria Primary Care Intranet](#)

References and embedded links:

NICE CG32: [Overview](#) | [Nutrition support for adults: oral nutrition support, enteral tube feeding and parenteral nutrition](#) | [Guidance](#) | [NICE](#)

The Malnutrition Pathway: Managing Adult Malnutrition [Managing Malnutrition: Healthcare Professional Resources](#)

Food First: Your Guide To Making the Most of Your Food, Advice for patients and carers [pleaflet\\_yellow.pdf](#)