Oral Nutritional Supplements or ‘sip feeds’ are prescribed drinks that provide extra nourishment in an easy to take form. They can be prescribed for certain conditions for example disease related malnutrition. They are frequently used in the hospital setting to support recovery and prevent further weight loss.

Oral Nutritional Supplements are made by pharmaceutical companies and typically come as a powder to be made up with fresh milk or a drink in a bottle or carton. Most of them provide 300Kcal to 400kcals (calories) per unit, as well as proteins, vitamins and minerals. The Oral Nutritional Supplements used in our Hospitals are made by Nutricia Clinical Care (Fortisip/Fortijuice range).

Oral Nutritional Supplements should not replace food, but supplement dietary intake. They work best when taken in addition to nourishing foods which can be fortified with extra butter cream and cheese. Homemade milkshakes can be used instead of Oral Nutritional Supplements and patients often find these more palatable. This is called a ‘Food First’ approach.

‘Sip feeds’ work best if you:

- drink them slowly. It should take 20 -30 minutes to drink one bottle
- take them every day as prescribed
- take them after or between meals so they don’t put you off eating meals
- ‘sip feeds’ should not replace ordinary food – eat meals and snacks as well.

Oral Nutritional Supplements are prescribed for a limited time (usually no more than 3 months) to support recovery and prevent further weight loss. When you are discharged from hospital your GP will review whether a prescription is still required.

If an Oral Nutritional Supplement is prescribed by your GP this will regularly be reviewed to monitor effectiveness/compliance. Your GP may use an alternative brand to the range used in hospital. If you require more specialist nutritional support your GP may refer you to a dietitian.

Further advice and support is also available from your community pharmacist.

If you would like more information on a ‘Food First’ approach please ask a member of staff to provide you with a ‘Eating Well with a Small Appetite’ or ‘Build Up advice Leaflet’.