

Nutritional Supplements in Substance Misusers: GP Guidelines

GPs **should not** prescribe oral nutritional supplements in substance misuse.

Substance misuse is not an ACBS indication for prescribing nutritional supplements.

Inspire Substance Misuse Service advises against prescribing of oral nutritional supplements. There are a number of drugs subject to abuse which promote weight loss including amphetamines, cocaine, opioids, cannabis and alcohol. Inspire recommends referral to their service to address the root cause of weight loss, as part of holistic treatment.

Enforcing the importance of a balanced diet is a key part of the patients' rehabilitation programme and as such will help empower individuals to regain control of their lives.

There are exceptional circumstances where prescribing **short term (1-3months)** nutritional supplements may be beneficial to increase weight and address symptoms of malnutrition. This should be **ONLY** after dietetic advice has been given, tried and documented as not successful. In this case Fresubin Energy Shake or similar milk fortifying product may be offered. Sips feeds should be avoided.

It is important to be aware of the problems associated with sip feed prescribing for substance misusers:

- Once started on sip feeds it can be very difficult to stop the prescription
- Sip feeds are taken as meal replacements not in addition to meals so no overall benefit
- Maybe given or sold to family/friends
- Can be hard to monitor this group and reassess need to continue/stop sip feeds

Nutritional supplements should NOT be prescribed to substance misusers unless ALL of the following are met:

BMI \leq 18

And there is evidence of significant weight loss (> 10%) in 3-6 months

And there is a co-existing medical condition fulfilling ACBS criteria which could affect weight or food intake

And nutritional advice has been given, tried and not successful

And the patient is in a rehabilitation programme or on a waiting list

Where nutritional supplements are initiated:

The patient **must** comply with ACBS prescribing criteria.

Prescriptions should be kept on acute.

Prescribed only for a short-term basis (1-3 months).

Long term use should be **ONLY** following dietician assessment and continued **ONLY** under active dietician review.

Nutritional supplements will be discontinued if patient fails to see dietician/attend for weight monitoring.