

Ensure[®] Plus Advance Position Statement

Ensure[®] Plus Advance (EPA) is not recommended for prescribing in North Central London (NCL) for any condition.

Ensure[®] Plus Advance (EPA) is a 220ml ready-to-drink oral nutritional supplement (ONS) formulated specifically for older adults (>65 years) who have, or are at risk of, malnutrition. Each bottle provides 330kcal, 20g protein plus vitamins & minerals.

- **EPA is premium priced compared to alternative more cost effective oral nutritional supplements.**
- **The calories & protein provided by EPA can be obtained by food fortification or, if an ONS is clinically indicated, a powdered shake or standard ready-to-drink ONS.**
- **There is no robust clinical evidence to support the claimed additional benefits of EPA in patients with COVID-19 outside of the standard ACBS indication.**

There are no exclusions to this Position Statement.

Rationale

Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS) are Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances (ACBS) approved borderline substances that can be prescribed on NHS prescription (FP10/EPS). ONS are available in powdered or ready-to-drink forms and contain varying amounts of energy, protein and micronutrients.

Some ONS products have been marketed as being nutritionally beneficial as a result of containing specific nutrients for example additional vitamin D, additional protein, hydroxymethylbutyrate (HMB). An example of such a product is Ensure® Plus Advance (manufactured by Abbott Nutrition), which contains HMB.

During the coronavirus pandemic, Abbott have been promoting the use of Ensure® Plus Advance in patients with COVID-19 based on findings from the Nourish study(1).

The Nourish study claims treatment of elderly patients with a high protein supplement containing HMB (HP-HMB) (similar in composition to Ensure Plus Advance ®) during hospitalisation and 90 days post-discharge can reduce mortality by 50%.

Study limitations

The study did not compare the high protein supplement (HP-HMB) with a supplement similar in composition with regards to kcal/protein content. The study used a control (placebo) product which was low in kcals/nutrients (96kcal, 0g protein, 20mg vit C per day) as a comparator to 2 servings of the high protein supplement per day (700kcal, 40g protein per day).

Therefore, the study could not demonstrate that a supplement containing HMB was more beneficial to patients than a more cost effective powdered shake containing more kcals & equivalent protein (e.g. Aymes® Shake) or a more cost effective high protein ready-to-drink ONS.

Furthermore, the study was not designed to determine the effect of individual nutrients, thus whether specific components in the HP-HMB supplement were responsible for the observed reduction in mortality could not be determined (1). Also, the study did not include data on the daily dietary intake of participants (1).

Study impartiality

The study was funded by Abbott who also developed the protocol and analysed the data. The authors/investigators were all bound by confidentiality agreements with Abbott.

Conflicts of interest.

Four of the study's authors report employment with Abbott including stock ownership/options.

Prescribing in NCL

Although ACBS criteria permits the prescribing of Ensure® Plus Advance on NHS prescription (FP10/EPS) in frail elderly patients aged older than 65 years with a BMI <23 kg/m², Ensure® Plus Advance is premium priced compared to other ONS products which contain equivalent energy, protein and micronutrients, with the exception of HMB.

As the evidence to support the clinical benefits of HMB is insufficient, alternative cost effective and clinically appropriate ONS products should be used instead of Ensure® Plus Advance in malnourished patients who meet the criteria for prescribing in the community.

Ensure® Plus Advance can be substituted with the following:

	Energy (per serving)	Protein (per serving)	Cost per day (2 servings)	Cost per month (28 days)
Ensure® Plus Advance	330kcal	20g	£4.40	£123.20
fortified Horlicks *	319kcal	19g	£0.96p *	£26.88*
Aymes® Shake	383kcal	19g	£0.98p	£27.44
Altraplen® Protein	300kcal	20g	£3.39	£94.92

*Homemade supplement using full fat milk, skimmed milk powder & Horlicks

References

1. Deutz NE, Matheson EM, Matarese LE, Luo M, Baggs GE, Nelson JL, Hegazi RA, Tappenden KA, Ziegler TR; Nourish Study Group. Readmission and mortality in malnourished hospitalised adults treated with a specialised oral nutritional supplement: A randomised clinical trial. Clin Nutr, 2016 Feb; 35 (1): 18-26. Available at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0261561415003489>.

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