



Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust

Looking after your child’s teeth while they are having nutritional supplement drinks: information for families

This information sheet from Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) provides information about nutritional supplement drinks, how they could affect your child’s teeth and suggestions for dental health. They will have discussed the content of this information sheet with you but if you have any questions, please ask your dietitian.

Please note: This information sheet should only be used under the supervision of a Registered Dietitian and may not be suitable for every child. Although every care is taken when compiling this information sheet, manufacturers may alter ingredients of foods and drinks without warning. Including brands in this information sheet does not mean that they are recommended by GOSH and alternative products (including supermarket own brands) may be available.

Information for		Date given	
Information given by		Contact details	020 7405 9200 ext

If the dietitian is not available please leave a message. Your enquiry will be followed up as soon as possible (within five working days).

What is a nutritional supplement drink?

Nutritional supplement drinks are usually similar to milkshakes and contain a range of energy, protein and vitamins – they are often suggested for people who struggle to eat a balanced diet for a variety of reasons. Your dietitian will explain why they think nutritional supplements could benefit your child.

Why has my child been prescribed nutritional supplement drinks?

- Some children struggle to meet their nutritional needs from their normal diet – either because they are on a restricted diet or as a side effect of treatment.
- Others may need nutritional supplement drinks as an addition to their medical management.
- Where possible, these drinks are used alongside a nutritionally enriched diet – that is, one that contains as much goodness as possible. However, some children use them as their sole source of nutrition.

Are these bad for my child’s teeth?

Nutritional supplement drinks contain large amounts of sugar so that they provide enough calories or energy for development and growth. The table below shows how they compare with other common drinks.

Example	Sugar content per portion
Standard nutritional supplements (1kcal/ml) from a variety of brands	5g to 21g (125-200ml bottle)
Orange juice	13g (150mls glass)
Full fat cow’s milk	9g (200ml glass)
Coca Cola® (regular version)	36g (330ml can)
Chocolate Nesquik® milkshake powder mixed with full fat cow’s milk	20g (200ml glass)

This is why we recommend paying special attention to your child's dental health while they are having the supplement drinks.

- Tell your child's dentist that they have been prescribed nutritional supplement drinks to help with their growth and nutrition. Your dentist may suggest that your child attends more regular review appointments while they are having the drinks. Remember, in most cases, dental check-ups for children under 19 years old are free under the NHS.
- Please be extra careful if your child takes the supplement drink from a baby bottle with a teat or a beaker with a valve, rather than an open cup or free-flowing beaker as this increases the risk of tooth decay.
- Your dietitian will tell you how long they expect your child will need to keep taking the drinks and when they will review if they still need them.

Advice on dental health

- As soon as your child's first tooth appears, you should brush them, and subsequent teeth that appear, with a soft toothbrush and toothpaste. Visit a dentist for regular check-ups from the age of one year
- Make sure your child brushes their teeth (or you do it for them if they are under the age of 8) at least twice each day (morning and night) for two minutes each time – some dentists can give you a timer. After your child has finished brushing their teeth, encourage them to spit the toothpaste out instead of rinsing their mouth. Do not worry if some of the toothpaste is swallowed – this is not harmful. You or your child should brush their teeth last thing at night, after this they should only drink water.
- Avoid giving nutritional supplement drinks overnight as the sugar will remain on their teeth causing plaque and decay. Avoid giving nutritional supplements in a bottle with a teat or beaker with a valve where possible – encourage your child to drink from an open cup (or, if necessary to prevent spills, a free-flowing beaker) after their first birthday. After drinking a nutritional supplement, encourage your child to drink some water to wash any sugar from their mouth
- Use a fluoride toothpaste – check the package so you use one that contains at least 1000 parts per million (ppm) fluoride for under threes and between 1000 ppm and 1500 ppm for over threes
- Be particularly careful of any foods that stick to the surface of the teeth and contain naturally-occurring sugars, such as raisins which contain nearly 10g fruit sugar in a 14g portion (small box).

Other useful tips

- Remember to follow your dietitian's advice to get the most from your child's diet, if they are eating alongside taking supplement drinks. They may suggest:
 - eating little and often, if your child has a small appetite
 - using full fat products rather than low fat
 - adding extra fat to foods such as oil, butter, cream or cheese
 - include snacks high in fat and protein but low in sugar, such as cheese and unsalted nuts
- Your dietitian will discuss other sources of sugar in your child's diet, as it may be helpful to reduce these while your child is taking supplement drinks.

Further information and support

- Information about the Dietetic department at GOSH is available online at www.gosh.nhs.uk/parents-and-visitors/clinical-support-services/dietetics-information-parents-and-visitors
- For more information on sugar in the diet, see the NHS change4life website: www.nhs.uk/change4life/food-facts/sugar