

Advice to help to improve sip feed acceptability

Basic advice

- Dietary counselling (Food First advice) should be the first-line advice and should continue when sip feeds are used.
- Patients should be advised on why they are taking the sip feed, how much and for how long.
- By optimising the calorie content of oral sip feeds the patient is required to take fewer bottles. Therefore ≥ 2.0 kcal/ml sip feeds are usually recommended as the first-line choice.
- If used as a sole source of nutrition, the sip feed must be nutritionally complete and be given in sufficient volume to achieve nutritional requirements.
- Patients should be monitored according to local policy to review progress in terms of appetite and weight, and ensure continued acceptability of sip feeds.

Specific medical conditions:

- Patients who have a specific condition, e.g. renal failure, malabsorption or allergies should be referred to the Dietitian as more specialised products may be required.
- Patients with swallowing problems should be referred to a Speech and Language Therapist for assessment.
- Patients with diabetes should be prescribed milk or yoghurt style sip feeds as the juice-style supplements have a higher carbohydrate content and glycaemic index. They should be advised to sip the supplement slowly over 1 – 2 hours, and blood glucose levels should be closely monitored, and medication may need to be altered.
- In end of life care consideration should be given to the patient's quality of life and psychological wellbeing. Encourage small, frequent meals and advise them to choose their favourite foods. Before prescribing sip feeds encourage over the counter products such as Complan (not the same as Complan Shake) or Build-up / Meritene Energis. Monitoring should be appropriate to the patient's condition.

Tips for improving compliance:

- Sip feeds are available in a wide range of flavours and types. Acceptability and compliance improves when the choice of sip feed, including type, flavour and consistency, is discussed with the patient.
- Decanting the sip feed into a glass may improve uptake.
- Savoury varieties are available for patients who do not like sweet drinks.
- The majority of sip feeds taste better when chilled. Some can be frozen into ice cubes, ice cream or lollies.
- Some flavours such as chocolate, vanilla/neutral, cappuccino and mocha, and the soups can be gently heated, but should not be boiled.
- Juice-based supplements can be diluted with still or sparkling water or lemonade to make a longer drink, which is often more palatable.
- There are numerous recipes to make sip feeds more interesting and palatable. Most sip feed manufacturers also provide recipes for using their products.